

The meaning of the
Glorious Qur'an
Text, Translation and Commentary by
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The Names of God(Asma al-Husna):

1 ALLAH - (The Name Of God)
2 AR-RAHMAN - (The Beneficent)
3 AR-RAHIM - (The Mercifull)
4 AL-MALIK - (The Sovereign Lord)
5 AL-QUDDUS - (The Holy)
6 AS-SALAM - (The Source Of Peace)
7 AL-MU'MIN - (The Guardian Of Faith)
8 AL-MUHAYMIN - (The Protector)
9 AL-AZIZ - (The Mighty)
10 AL-JABBAR - (The Compeller)
11 AL-MUTAKABBIR - (The Majestic)
12 AL-KHALIQ - (The Creator)
13 AL-BARI - (The Evolver)
14 AL-MUSAWWIR - (The Fashioner)
15 AL-GHAFFAR - (The Forgiver)
16 AL-QAHHAR - (The Subduer)
17 AL-WAHHAB - (The Bestover)
18 AR-RAZZAQ - (The Provider)
19 AL-FATTAH - (The Opner)
20 AL-ALIM - (The All Knowning)
21 AL-QABIZ - (The Constrictor)
22 AL-BASIT - (The Expender)
23 AL-KHAFIZ - (The Abaser)
24 AR-RAFI - (The Exalter)
25 AL-MUIZZ - (The Honourer)
26 AL-MUZILL - (The Dishonourer)
27 AS-SAMI - (The All Hearing)
28 AL-BASIR - (The All Seeing)
29 AL-HAKAM - (The Judge)
30 AL-ADL - (The Just)
31 AL-LATIF - (The Subtle One)
32 AL-KHABIR - (The Aware)
33 AL-HALIM - (The Forbearing One)
34 AL-AZIM - (The Great One)
35 AL-GHAFUR - (The All-Forgiving)
36 ASH-SHAKUR - (The Appreciative)
37 AL-ALI - (The Most High)
38 AL-KABIR - (The Most Great)
39 AL-HAFIZ - (The Preserver)
40 AL-MUQIT - (The Maintainer)
41 AL-HASEEB - (The Reckoner)
42 AL-JALIL - (The Sublime One)
43 AL-KARIM - (The Generous One)
44 AR-RAQIB - (The Watchfull)
45 AL-MUJIB - (The Responsive)
46 AL-WASI - (The All-Embracing)
47 AL-HAKEEM - (The Wise)
48 AL-WADUD - (The Loving)
49 AL-MAJEED - (The Most Glorious One)
50 AL-BA'ITH - (The Resurrector)
ASH-SHAHEED - (The Witness)
52 AL-HAQQ - (The Truth)
53 AL-WAKIL - (The Trustee)
54 AL-QAWI - (The Most Strong)
55 AL-MATEEN - (The Firm One)
56 AL-WALI - (The Protecting Friend)
57 AL-HAMEED - (The Praiseworthy)
58 AL-MUHSI - (The Reckoner)
59 AL-MUBDI - (The Originator)
60 AL-MU'ID - (The Restorer)
61 AL-MUHYI - (The Giver Of Life)
62 AL-MUMIT - (The Creator Of Death)
63 AL-HAYEE - (The Alive)
64 AL-QAYYUM - (The Self-subsisting)
65 AL-WAJID - (The Finder)
66 AL-MAJID - (The Noble)
67 AL-AHAD - (The One)
68 AS-SAMAD - (The Eternal)
69 AL-QADIR - (The Able)
70 AL-MUQTADIR - (The Powerful)
71 AL-MUQADDIM - (The Expediter)
72 AL-MU'AKHKHIR - (The Delayer)
73 AL-AWWAL - (The First)
74 AL-AAKHIR - (The Last)
75 AZ-ZAHIR - (The Manifest)
76 AL-BATIN - (The Hidden)
77 AL-WALI - (The Governor)
78 AL-MUTA'ALI - (The Most Exalted)
79 AL-BARR - (The Source Of All Goodness)
80 AT-TAWWAB - (The Acceptor Of Repentance)
81 AL-MUNTAQIM - (The Avenger)
82 AL-'AFUW - (The Pardoner)
83 AR-RAOOF - (The Compassionate)
84 MALIK-UL-MULK - (The Eternal Owner Of Sovereignty)
85 ZUL-JALAL-E-WAL-IKRAM
(The Lord Of Majesty and Bounty)
86 AL-MUQSIT - (The Equitable)
87 AL-JAAMAY - (The Gatherer)
88 AL-GHANI - (The Self-Sufficient)
89 AL-MUGHNI - (The Enricher)
90 AL-MAANAY - (The Preventer)
91 AD-DAARR - (The Distresser)
92 AN-NAAFAY - (The Propitious)
93 AN-NOOR - (The Light)
94 AL-HAADI - (The Guide)
95 AL-BADEI - (The Incomparable)
96 AL-BAQI - (The Everlasting)
97 AL-WARIS - (The Supreme Inheritor)
98 AR-RASHEED - (The Guide To The Right Path)
99 AS-SABOOR - (The Patient)

Chapters



In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

1. Al Fatiha (The Opening Chapter)

1. In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful(19).

19 The Arabic words *"Rahman and Rahim,"* translated "Most Gracious" and "Most Merciful" are both intensive forms referring to different aspects of Allah's attribute of Mercy. The Arabic intensive is more suited to express Allah's attributes than the superlative degree in English. The latter implies a comparison with other beings, or with other times or places, while there is no being like unto Allah, and He is independent of Time and Place. Mercy may imply pity, long-suffering, patience, and forgiveness, all of which the sinner needs and Allah Most Merciful bestows in abundant measure. But there is a Mercy that goes before even the need arises, the Grace which is ever watchful, and flows from Allah Most Gracious to all His creatures, protecting them, preserving them, guiding them, and leading them to clearer light and higher life. For this reason the attribute *Rahman* (Most Gracious) is not applied to any but Allah, but the attribute *Rahim* (Merciful), is a general term, and may also be applied to Men. To make us contemplate these boundless gifts of Allah, the formula: "In the name of Allah Most Gracious, Most Merciful": is placed before every Surah of the Qur'an (except the ninth), and repeated at the beginning of every act by the Muslim who dedicates his life to Allah, and whose hope is in His Mercy.

Opinion is divided whether the *Bismillah* should be numbered as a separate verse or not It is unanimously agreed that it is a part of the Qur'an. Therefore it is better to give it an independent number in the first Surah. For subsequent Surahs it is treated as an introduction or headline, and therefore not numbered.

2. Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer(20) of the worlds;

20 The Arabic word *Rabb,* usually translated Lord, has also the meaning of cherishing, sustaining, bringing to maturity. Allah cares for all the worlds He has created (see n. 1787 and n. 4355).

There are many worlds - astronomical and physical worlds, worlds of thought, spiritual world, and so on. In every one of them, Allah is all-in-all. We express only one aspect of it when we say: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." The mystical division between (1) *Nasut,* the human world knowable by the senses, (2) *Malakut,* the invisible world of angels, and (3) *Lahut,* the divine world of Reality, requires a whole volume to explain it.

3. Most Gracious, Most Merciful;

4. Master of the Day of Judgment.

5. Thee do we worship(21), and Thine aid we seek.

21 On realizing in our souls Allah's love and care, His grace and mercy, and His power and justice (as Ruler of the Day of Judgement), the immediate result is that we bend in the act of worship, and see both our shortcomings and His all-sufficient power. The emphatic form means that not only do we reach the position of worshipping Allah and asking for His help, but we worship Him alone and ask for His aid only. For there is none other than He worthy of our devotion and able to help us. Then plural "we" indicates that we associate ourselves with all who seek Allah, thus strengthening ourselves and strengthening them in a fellowship of faith (see n. 586).

6. Show(22) us the straight way,

22 If we translate by the English word "guide," we shall have to say: "Guide us to and in the straight Way." For we may be wandering aimlessly, and the first step is to find the Way; and the second need is to keep in the Way: Our own wisdom may fail in either case. The straight Way is often the narrow Way, or the steep Way, which many people shun (90:11). By the world's perversity the straight Way is sometimes stigmatized and the crooked Way praised. How are we to judge? We must ask for Allah's guidance. With a little spiritual insight we shall see which are the people who walk in the light of Allah's grace, and which are those that walk in the darkness of Wrath. This also would help our judgement.

7. The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath(23), and who go not astray(24).

23 Note that the words relating to Grace are connected actively with Allah; those relating to Wrath are impersonal. In the one case Allah's Mercy encompasses us beyond our deserts. In the other case our own actions are responsible for the Wrath - the negative of Grace, Peace, or Harmony.

24 Are there two categories? - those who are in the darkness of Wrath and those who stray? The first are those who deliberately break Allah's law; the second those who stray out of carelessness or negligence. Both are responsible for their own acts or omissions. In opposition to both are the people who are in the light of Allah's Grace: for His Grace not only protects them from active wrong (if they will only submit their will to Him) but also from straying into paths of temptation or carelessness. The negative *ghayr* should be construed as applying not to the way, but as describing men protected from two dangers by Allah's Grace.

2. Al Baqara (The Heifer)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A.L.M.(25).

25 These are abbreviated letters, the *Muqatta'at,* on which a general discussion will be found in Appendix I (at the end of this Surah).

The particular letters, *Alif, Lam, Mim,* are found prefixed to this Surah, and Surahs 3, 29, 30, 31 and 32 (six in all). In 2 and 3 the argument is about the rise and fall of nations, their past, and their future in history, with ordinances for the new universal people of Islam. In 29 a similar argument about nations leads off to the mystery of Life and Death, Failure and Triumph, Past and Future, in the history of individual souls. The burden of 30 is that Allah is the source of all things and all things return to Him. In 31 and 32 the same lesson is enforced: Allah is the Creator and He will be the Judge on the Last Day. There is therefore a common thread, the mystery of Life and Death, Beginning and End.

Much has been written about the meaning of these letters, but most of it is pure conjecture. Some commentators are content to recognize them as some mystic symbols of which it is unprofitable to discuss the meaning by more verbal logic. (R). .

2. This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear(26) Allah.

26 *Taqwa ,* and the verbs and nouns connected with the root, signify: (1) the fear of Allah, which, according to the writer of Proverbs 1:7 in the Old Testament, is the beginning of Wisdom; (2) restraint, or guarding one's tongue, hand, and heart from evil; (3) hence righteousness, piety, good conduct. All these ideas are implied: in the translation, only one or other of these ideas can be indicated, according to the context. See also 47:17; and 74:56, n. 5808.

3. Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them(27);

27 All bounties proceed from Allah. They may be physical gifts, *e.g.* food, clothing, houses, gardens, wealth, etc. or intangible gifts, *e.g.,* influence, power, birth and the opportunities flowing from it, health, talents, etc. or spiritual gifts, *e.g.,* insight into good and evil, understanding of men, the capacity for love, etc. We are to use all in humility and moderation. But we are also to give out of every one of them something that contributes to the well-being of others. We are to be neither ascetics nor luxurious sybarites, neither selfish misers nor thoughtless prodigals.

4. And who believe in the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter(28).

28 Righteousness comes from a secure faith, from sincere devotion to Allah, and from unselfish service to humankind.

5. They are on (true) guidance, from their Lord, and it is these who will prosper(29).

29 Prosperity must be taken as referring to all the kinds of bounty which we discussed in the note to 2:3 above. The right use of one kind leads to an increase in that and other kinds, and that is prosperity.

6. As to those who reject Faith(30), it is the same to them whether thou warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe.

30 *Kafara, kufr, Kafir,* and derivative forms of the word, imply a deliberate rejection of Faith as opposed to a mistaken idea of Allah or faith, which is not inconsistent with an earnest desire to see the truth. Where there is such desire, the Grace and Mercy of Allah gives guidance. But that guidance is not efficacious when it is deliberately rejected, and the possibility of rejection follows from the grant of free will. The consequence of the rejection is that the spiritual faculties become dead or impervious to better influences, See also n. 93, n. 3557, and n. 3644.

7. Allah hath set a seal(31) on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty they (incur)(32).

31 All actions are referred to Allah. Therefore when we get the penalty of our deliberate sin, and our senses become impervious to good, the penalty is referred to the justice of Allah *(Cf.* n.1460, n. 2146, and n. 3577).

32 The penalty here is the opposite of the prosperity referred to in 2:5. As we go down the path of sin, our penalty gathers momentum, just as goodness brings its own capacity for greater goodness.

8. Of the people there are some who say(33): "We believe in Allah and the Last Day;" but they do not (really) believe.

33 We now come to a third class of people, the hypocrites. They are untrue to themselves, and therefore their hearts are diseased (2:10). The disease tends to spread, like all evil. They are curable but if they harden their hearts, they soon pass into the category of those who deliberately reject light.

9. Fain would they deceive Allah and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realise (it) not!

10. In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease(34): And grievous is the penalty they (incur), because they are false (to themselves).

34 The insincere man who thinks he can get the best of both worlds by compromising with good and evil only increases the disease of his heart, because he is not true to himself. Even the good which comes to him he can pervert to evil. So the rain which fills out the ear of corn or lends fragrance to the rose also lends strength to the thorn or adds strength to the poison of the deadly nightshade. *(Cf.* 9:125 and n. 1376).

11. When it is said to them: "Make not mischief on the earth," they say: "Why, we only Want to make peace!"

12. Of a surety, they are the ones who make mischief, but they realise (it) not(35).

35 Much mischief is caused (sometimes unwittingly) by people who think that they have a mission of peace, when they have not even a true perception of right and wrong. By their blind arrogance they depress the good and encourage the evil.

13. When it is said to them: "Believe as the others believe:" They say: "Shall we believe as the fools believe?" Nay, of a surety they are the fools, but they do not know(36).

36 This is another phase of the hypocrite and the cynic. "Faith," he says, "is good enough to fools." But his cynicism may be the greatest folly in the eyes of Allah.

14. When they meet those who believe(37), they say: "We believe;" but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say: "We are really with you: We (were) only jesting."

37 A deeper phase of insincerity is actual duplicity. But it never pays in the end. If we compare such a man to a trader, he loses in the bargain.

15. Allah will throw back their mockery on them, and give them rope in their trespasses; so they will wander like blind ones (To and fro).

16. These are they who have bartered Guidance for error: But their traffic is profitless, and they have lost true direction,

17. Their similitude is that of a man(38) who kindled a fire; when it lighted all around him, Allah took away

their light and left them in utter darkness. So they could not see.

38 The man wanted light; he only kindled a fire. It produced a blaze, and won the applause of all around. But it did not last long. When the flame went our as was inevitable, the darkness was worse than before. And they all lost their way. So hypocrisy, deception, arrogant compromise with evil, cynicism, or duplicity may win temporary applause. But the true light of faith and sincerity is wanting, and therefore it must mislead and ruin all concerned. In the consternation they cannot speak or hear each other, and of course they cannot see; so they end like the deliberate rejecters of Faith (2:7), wildly groping about, dumb, deaf and blind. *(Cf.* n. 1153).

18. Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not return (to the path).

19. Or (another similitude)(39) is that of a rain-laden cloud from the sky: In it are zones of darkness, and thunder and lightning: They press their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap, the while they are in terror of death. But Allah is ever round the rejecters of Faith!

39 A wonderfully graphic and powerful simile applying to those who reject Faith. In their self-sufficiency they are undisturbed normally. But what happens when a great storm breaks over them? They cover their ears against thunder-claps, and the lightning nearly blinds them. They are in mortal fear, but Allah encompasses them around — even them, for He at all times encompasses all. He gives them rope. In the intervals of deafening noise and blinding flashes, there are moments of steady light, and these creatures take advantage of them, but again they are plunged into darkness. Perhaps they curse; perhaps they think that the few moments of effective light are due to their own intelligence! How much wiser would they be if they humbled themselves and sought the light of Allah!

20. The lightning all but snatches away their sight; every time the light (Helps) them, they walk therein, and when the darkness grows on them, they stand still. And if Allah willed, He could take away their faculty of hearing and seeing; for Allah hath power over all things.

21. O ye people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteous(40);

40 For *Taqwa* see 2:2, n. 26. I connect this dependent clause with "adore, etc." above, though it could be connected with "created." According to my construction the argument will be as follows. Adoration is the act of the highest and humblest reverence and worship. When you get into that relationship with Allah, Who is your Creator and Guardian, your faith produces works of righteousness. It is a chance given you: will you exercise your free will and take it? If you do, your whole nature will be transformed.

22. Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith Fruits for your sustenance; then set not up rivals(41) unto Allah when ye know (the truth).

41 Further proofs of Allah's goodness to you are given in this verse. Your whole life, physical and spiritual, depends upon Him. The spiritual is figured by the Canopy of Heaven. The truth has been brought plainly before you. Will you still resist it and go after false gods, the creation of your own fancy? The false gods may be idols, superstitions, self, or even great or glorious things like Poetry, Art, or Science, when set up as rivals to Allah. They may be pride of race, pride of birth, pride of wealth or position, pride of power, pride of learning, or even spiritual pride.

23. And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Sura like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (If there are any) besides Allah, if your (doubts) are true(42).

42 How do we know that there is revelation, and that it is from Allah? Here is a concrete test. The Teacher of Allah's Truth has placed before you many Surahs. Can you produce one like it? If there is any one besides Allah, who can inspire spiritual truth in such noble language, produce your evidence. Or is it that your doubts are merely argumentative, refractory, against your own inner light, or conscience? All true revelation is itself a miracle, and stands on its own merits. *(Cf.* 10:38; 11:13).

24. But if ye cannot- and of a surety ye cannot- then fear the Fire whose fuel is men and stones,- which is prepared for those who reject Faith(43).

43 According to commentators the "Stones" mentioned in this verse refer to the idols which the polytheists worshipped. Thus, far from coming to the aid of their worshippers, the false gods would be a means of aggravating their torment. [Eds.].

25. But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow. Every time they are fed with fruits therefrom, they say: "Why, this is what we were fed with before," for they are given things in similitude; and they have therein companions pure (and holy)(44); and they abide therein (forever).

44 What can be more delightful than a Garden where you observe from a picturesque height a beautiful landscape round you — rivers flowing with crystal water, and fruit trees of which the choicest fruit is before you. The fruit of goodness is goodness, similar, but choicer in every degree of ascent. You think it is the same, but it is because of your past experiences and associations of memory. (R). *(Cf.* 4:57).

26. Allah disdains not to use the similitude of things, lowest(45) as well as highest. Those who believe know that it is truth from their Lord; but those who reject Faith say: "What means Allah by this similitude?" By it He causes many to stray, and many He leads into the right path; but He causes not to stray, except those who forsake (the path),-

45 The word for "the lowest" in the original Arabic means a gnat, a byword in the Arabic language for the weakest of creatures. In 29:41, which was revealed before this Surah, the similitude of the Spider was used, and similarly in 22:73, there is the similitude of the fly. For similitudes taken from magnificent forces of nature, expressed in exalted language, see 2:19 above. To Allah all His creation has some special meaning appropriate to itself, and some of what we consider the lowest creatures have wonderful aptitude, *e.g.,* the spider or the fly. Parables like these may be an occasion of stumbling to those "who forsake the path": in other words those who deliberately shut their eyes to Allah's Signs, and their Penalty is attributed to Allah, the Cause of all causes. But lest there should be misunderstanding, it is immediately added that the stumbling and offence only occur as the result of the sinner's own choice of the wrong course. Verses 26 and 27 form one sentence and should be read together." Forsaking the path" is defined in 2:27 ; *viz.,* breaking solemn covenants which the sinner's own soul had ratified, causing division among mankind, who were meant to be one brotherhood, and doing as much mischief as possible in the life on this earth, for the life beyond will be on another plane, where no rope will be given to evil.

27. Those who break Allah.s Covenant(45-A) after it is ratified, and who sunder what Allah Has ordered to be joined, and do mischief on earth: These cause loss (only) to themselves.

45-A The mention of the Covenant has a particular and a general signification. The particular one has reference to the Jewish tradition that a Covenant was entered into with "Father Abraham" that in return for Allah's favours the seed of Abraham would serve Allah faithfully. But as a matter of fact a great part of Abraham's progeny were in constant spiritual rebellion against Allah, as is testified by their own Prophets and Preachers and by Muhammad al-Mustaf a. The general signification is that a similar Covenant is entered into by every creature of Allah: for Allah's loving care, we at least owe Him the fullest gratitude and willing obedience. The Sinner, before he darkens his own conscience, knows this, and yet he not only "forsakes the path" but resists the Grace of Allah which comes to save him. That is why his case becomes hopeless. But the loss is his own. He cannot spoil Allah's design. The good man is glad to retrace his steps from any lapses of which he may have been guilty, and in his case Allah's Message reclaims him with complete understanding. (R).

28. How can ye reject(46) the faith in Allah.- seeing that ye were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return.

46 In the preceding verses Allah has used various arguments. He has recalled His goodness (2:21 -22); resolved doubts (2:23); plainly set forth the penalty of wrongdoing (2:24); given glad tidings (2:25); shown how misunderstandings

arise from a deliberate rejection of the light and breach of the Covenant (2:26 - 27). Now (2:28 -29) He pleads with His creatures and appeals to their own subjective feelings. He brought you into being. The mysteries of life and death are in His hands. When you die on this earth, that is not the end. You were of Him and you must return to Him. *(Cf.* n.4387 and n. 4371). Look around you and realize your own dignity: it is from Him. The immeasurable depths of space above and around you may stagger you. They are part of His plan. What you have imagined as the seven firmaments (and any other scheme you may construct) bears witness to His design of order and perfection, for His knowledge (unlike yours) is all-comprehending. And yet will you deliberately reject or obscure or deaden the faculty of Faith which has been put into you?

29. It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth; Moreover His design comprehended the heavens, for He gave order and perfection to the seven firmaments; and of all things He hath perfect knowledge.

30. Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?- whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not(47)."

47 It would seem that the angels, though holy and pure, and endued with power from Allah, yet represented only one side of creation. We may imagine them without passion or emotion, of which the highest flower is love. If man was to be endued with emotions, those emotions could lead him to the highest and drag him to the lowest. The power of will or choosing would have to go with them, in order that man might steer his own bark. This power of will (when used aright) gave him to some extent a mastery over his own fortunes and over nature, thus bringing him nearer to the God-like nature, which has supreme mastery and will. *(Cf.* n.3781). We may suppose the angels had no independent wills of their own: their perfection in other ways reflected Allah's perfection but could not raise them to the dignity of vicegerency. The perfect vicegerent is he who has the power of initiative himself, but whose independent action always reflects perfectly the will of his Principal. The distinction is expressed by Shakespeare (Sonnet 94) in those fine lines: "They are the lords and owners of their faces. Others but stewards of their excellence." The angels in their one-sidedness saw only the mischief consequent on the misuse of the emotional nature by man: perhaps they also, being without emotions, did not understand the whole of Allah's nature, which gives and asks for love. In humility and true devotion to Allah, they remonstrate: we must not imagine the least tinge of jealousy, as they are without emotion. This mystery of love being above them, they are told that they do not know, and they acknowledge (in 2:32 below) not their fault (for there is no question of fault) but their imperfection of knowledge. At the same time, the matter is brought home to them when the actual capacities of man are shown to them (2:31.33).

31. And He taught Adam the names(48) of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: "Tell me the nature of these if ye are right."

48 "The names of things:" according to commentators means the inner nature and qualities of things, and things here would include feelings. The particular qualities or feelings which were outside the nature of angels were put by Allah into the nature of man. Man was thus able to love and understand love, and thus plan and initiate, as becomes the office of vicegerent. The angels acknowledged this. These things they could only know from the outside, but they had faith, or belief in the Unseen. And they knew that Allah saw all - what others see, what others do not see, what others may even wish to conceal. Man has many qualities which are latent or which he may wish to suppress or conceal, to his own detriment. (R).

32. They said: "Glory to Thee, of knowledge We have none, save what Thou Hast taught us: In truth it is Thou Who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom."

33. He said: "O Adam! Tell them their natures." When he had told them, Allah said: "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?"

34. And behold, We said to the angels: "Bow down to Adam" and they bowed down. Not so Iblis(49): he refused and was haughty: He was of those who reject Faith.

49 The Arabic may also be translated: "They bowed down, except Iblis." In that case Ibl i s (Satan) would be one of the angels. But the theory of fallen angels is not accepted in Muslim theology. In 18:50 , Iblis is spoken of as a Jinn. We shall discuss later the meaning of this word. (R). (*Cf.* n.2392, n. 2393, and n. 929).

35. We said: "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden(50); and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression(51)."

50 Was the Garden of Eden a place on this earth? Obviously not. For, in verse 36 below, it was after the Fall that the sentence was pronounced: "On earth will be your dwelling-place." Before the Fall, we must suppose Man to be on another plane altogether — of felicity, innocence, trust, a spiritual existence, with the negation of enmity, want of faith, and all evil. (R).

51 *Zulm* in Arabic implies harm, wrong, injustice, or transgression, and may have reference to oneself; when the wrong is done to others it implies tyranny and oppression; the idea of wrong naturally connects itself with darkness, which is another shade of meaning carried with the root word.

36. Then did Satan(52) make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. We said: "Get ye down, all (ye people(53)), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood(54) - for a time."

52 The word Iblis in the verse 34 above is derived from the root idea of desperateness or rebellion whereas "Satan" conveys the idea of perversity or enmity. Note the appropriateness of the term on each occasion. Also, "slipping" from the Garden denotes the idea of Evil gradually tempting man from a higher to a lower state. (R). (Cf.7:20).

53 Allah's decree is the result of man's action. Note the transition in Arabic from the singular number in 2:33 , to the dual in 2:35 , and the plural here, which I have indicated in English by "All ye people." Evidently Adam is the type of all mankind, and the sexes go together in all spiritual matters. Moreover, the expulsion applied to Adam, Eve, and Satan, and the Arabic plural is appropriate for any number greater than two. (*Cf.*.n.3983).

54 Man's sojourn in this lower state, where he is partly an animal of this earth, is for a time. But he must fulfill his lower duties also, for they too are a part of his spiritual training. *(Cf.* n.1007).

37. Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration(55), and his Lord Turned towards him; for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

55 As "names" in verse 31 above is used for the "nature of things", so "words" here mean "inspiration," "spiritual knowledge." The Arabic word used for "learn" here implies some effort on his part, to which Allah's Grace responded.

The Arabic word for "Repentance" *(tawbah)* means "turning," and the intensive word *(tawwab)* for Allah's forgiveness ("Oft-Returning" or "Ever-Returning") is from the same root. For repentance, three things are necessary: the sinner must acknowledge his wrong; he must give it up; and he must resolve to eschew it for the future, Man's nature is weak, and he may have to return again and again for mercy. So long as he does it sincerely, Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful. For His grace helps out the sinner's shortcomings.

38. We said: "Get ye down all from here; and if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from me(56), whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

56 Note the transition from the plural "We" at the beginning of the verse to the singular "Me" later in the same verse, Allah speaks of Himself usually in the first person plural "We"; it is the plural of respect and honour and is used in human language in Royal proclamations and decrees. But where a special personal relationship is expressed the singular, "I" or "Me" is used *Cf.* 26:52, etc.

In spite of Man's fall, and in consequence of it, assurance of guidance is given. In case man follows the guidance he is free from any fear for the present or the future, and any grief or sorrow for the past. The soul thus freed grows nearer to Allah *(Cf.* n.4788).

39. "But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, they shall be companions of the Fire; they shall abide therein(57)."

57 As their rejection of faith was deliberate and definite, so the consequences must be of an abiding character. (R).

40. O Children of Israel! call to mind the (special) favour which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil your covenant(58) with Me as I fulfil My Covenant with you, and fear none but Me.

58 The appeal is made to Israel subjectively in terms of their own tradition. You claim to be a favoured nation: have you forgotten My favours? You claim a special Covenant with Me: I have fulfilled My part of the Covenant by bringing you out of the land of bondage and giving you Canaan, the land "flowing with milk and honey": how have you fulfilled your part of the Covenant? Do you fear for your national existence? If you fear Me, nothing else will matter.

41. And believe in what I reveal(59), confirming the revelation which is with you, and be not the first to reject Faith therein, nor sell My Signs for a small price; and fear Me, and Me alone.

59 You received revelations before: now comes one confirming it: its first appeal should be to you—are you to be the first to reject it? And reject it for what? Allah's Signs are worth more than all your paltry considerations. And the standard of duty and righteousness is to be taken from Allah, and not from priests and customs.

42. And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when ye know (what it is).

43. And be steadfast in prayer; practise regular charity; and bow down your heads(60) with those who bow down (in worship).

60 The argument is still primarily addressed co the Jews, but is of universal application, as in all the teachings of the Qur'an. The chief feature of Jewish worship was and is the bowing of the head.

44. Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (To practise it) yourselves, and yet ye study the Scripture? Will ye not understand?

45. Nay, seek ((Allah)´s) help with patient perseverance(61) and prayer: It is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit,-

61 The Arabic word Sabr implies many shades of meaning, which it is impossible to comprehend in one English word. It implies (1) patience in the sense of being thorough, not hasty; (2) patient perseverance, constancy, steadfastness, firmness of purpose; (3) systematic as opposed to spasmodic or chance action; (4) a cheerful attitude of resignation and understanding in sorrow, defeat, or suffering, as opposed to murmuring or rebellion, but saved from mere passivity or listlessness, by the element of constancy or steadfastness. (Cf. 2:153-154 and nn. 157458).

46. Who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord, and that they are to return to Him.

47. Children of Israel! call to mind the (special) favour which I bestowed upon you(62), and that I preferred you to all other (for My Message).

62 These words are recapitulated from 2:40 , which introduced a general account of Allah's favours to Israel ; now we are introduced to a particular account of incidents in Israel 's history. Each incident is introduced by the Arabic words Idh which is indicated in the translation by "Remember."

48. Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another nor shall intercession be accepted for her, nor shall compensation be taken from her, nor shall anyone be helped (from outside)(63).

63 Before passing to particular incidents, the conclusion is stated. Be on your guard: do not think that special favours exempt you from the personal responsibility of each soul. (Cf. 2:123 and 2:254).

49. And remember, We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh: They set you hard tasks and punishments, slaughtered your sons and let your women-folk live(64); therein was a tremendous trial from your Lord.

64 The bondage of Egypt was indeed a tremendous trial. Even the Egyptians' wish to spare the lives of Israel 's females when the males were slaughtered, added to the bitterness of Israel . Their hatred was cruel, but their "love" was still more cruel. *(Cf.* 14:6). About the hard tasks, see Exod. 1:14: "They made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour." Pharaoh's taskmasters gave no straw, yet ordered the Israelites to make bricks without straw: Exod. 5:5-19. Pharaoh's decree was: "Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive": Exod. 1:22. It was in consequence of this decree that Moses was hidden three months after he was born, and when he could be hidden no longer, he was put into an ark of bulrushes and cast into the Nile, where he was found by Pharaoh's daughter and wife (28:9), and adopted into the family: Exod. 2:2-10. *(Cf.* 20:37-40). Thus Moses was brought up by the enemies of his people. He was chosen by Allah to deliver his people, and Allah's wisdom made the learning and experience and even cruelties of the Egyptian enemies themselves to contribute to the salvation of his people.

50. And remember We divided the sea for you and saved you and drowned Pharaoh´s people within your very sight(65).

65 When the Israelites at last escaped from Egypt , they were pursued by Pharaoh and his host. By a miracle the Israelites crossed the Red Sea , but the host of Pharaoh was drowned: Exod. 14:5-31. *(Cf.* n. 1094).

51. And remember We appointed forty nights for Moses(66), and in his absence ye took the calf (for worship), and ye did grievous wrong.

66 This was after the Ten Commandments and the Laws and Ordinances had been given on Mount Sinai . Moses was asked up into the Mount, and he was there forty days and forty nights: Exod. 24:18. *(Cf.* n.1112). But the people got impatient of the delay, made a calf of melted gold, and offered worship and sacrifice to it: Exod. 32:1-8.

52. Even then We did forgive you(67); there was a chance for you to be grateful.

67 Moses prayed for his people, and Allah forgave them. This is the language of the Qur'an. The Old Testament version is rougher: "The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people": Exod. 32:14. The Muslim position has always been that the Jewish (and Christian) scriptures as they stand cannot be traced direct to Moses or Jesus, but are later compilations. Modern scholarship and Higher Criticism has left no doubt on the subject. But the stories in these traditional books may be used in an appeal to those who use them: only they should be spiritualized, as they are here, and especially in 2:54 below.

53. And remember We gave Moses the Scripture and the Criterion (68)(Between right and wrong): There was a chance for you to be guided aright.

68 *(Cf.* 8:29) Allah's revelation, the expression of Allah's Will, is the true standard of right and wrong. It may be in a Book or in Allah's dealings in history. All these may be called His Signs or Miracles. In this passage some commentators take the Scripture and the Criterion *(Furqan)* to be identical. Others take them to be two distinct things: Scripture being the written Book and the Criterion being other Signs. I agree with the latter view. The word *Furqan* also occurs in 21:48 in connection with Moses and Aaron and in the first verse of Sura 25, as well as in its title, in connection with Muhammad. As Aaron received no Book, Furqan must mean the other Signs. Al Mustafa had both the Book and the other Signs: perhaps here too we take the other Signs as supplementing the Book. *Cf.* Wordsworth's "Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong." (Prelude. Book 4).

54. And remember Moses said to his people: "O my people! Ye have indeed wronged yourselves by your worship of the calf: So turn (in repentance) to your Maker, and slay yourselves (the wrongdoers)(69); that will be better for you in the sight of your Maker." Then He turned towards you (in forgiveness): For He is Oft- Returning, Most Merciful.

69 Moses's speech may be construed literally, as translated, in which case it reproduces Exod. 32:27-28 but in a much softened form, for the Old Testament says: "Go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. . . and there fell of the people that day 3,000 men." (R).

The word here translated Maker *(B ari')* has also in it a touch of the root-meaning of "liberator"- an apt word as referring to the Israelites, who had just been liberated from bondage in Egypt.

55. And remember ye said(70): "O Moses! We shall never believe in thee until we see Allah manifestly," but ye were dazed with thunder and lighting even as ye looked on.

70 We have hitherto had instances from the Jewish traditional *Tawrah* (or Pentateuch). Now we have some instances from Jewish tradition in the Talmud, or body of exposition in the Jewish theological schools. They are based on the Jewish scriptures, but add many marvellous details and homilies. As to seeing Allah, we have in Exod. 33:20: "And He said, 'Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live'." The punishment for insisting on seeing Allah was therefore death: but those who rejected faith were forgiven, and yet they were ungrateful. (*Cf.* nn. 1121-1122, n. 3078).

56. Then We raised you up after your death: Ye had the chance to be grateful.

57. And We gave you the shade of clouds and sent down to you Manna(71) and quails, saying: "Eat of the good things We have provided for you:" (But they rebelled); to us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.

71 *Manna*= Hebrew, Man hu: Arabic Mahuwa? = What is it? In Exod. 16:14 it is described as "a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground". *(Cf.* 7:160). It usually rotted if left over till next day; it melted in the hot sun; the amount necessary for each man was about an Omer, a Hebrew measure of capacity equal to about 2 1/2 quarts. This is the Hebrew account, probably distorted by traditional exaggeration. The actual Manna found to this day in the Sinai region is a gummy saccharine secretion found on a species of Tamarisk. It is produced by the puncture of a species of insect like the cochineal, just as lac is produced by the puncture of the lac insect on certain trees in India . As to quails, large flights of them are driven by winds in the Eastern Mediterranean in certain seasons of the year, as was witnessed during the Great War of 1914-1918. (Cf. n. 2602). (R).

58. And remember We said: "Enter this town(72), and eat of the plenty therein as ye wish; but enter the gate with humility, in posture and in words, and We shall forgive you your faults and increase (the portion of) those who do good."

72 This probably refers to Shittim. It was the "town of acacias," just east of the Jordan , where the Israelites were guilty of debauchery and the worship of and sacrifices to false gods (Num. 25:1-2, also 8-9): a terrible punishment ensued, including the plague, of which 24,000 died. The word which the transgressors changed may have been a password. In the Arabic text it is *Hittatun* which implies humility and a prayer of forgiveness, a fitting emblem to distinguish diem from their enemies. From this particular incident a more general lesson may be drawn: in the hour of triumph we are to behave humbly as in Allah's sight, and our conduct should be exemplary according to Allah's word: otherwise our arrogance will draw its own punishment. These verses 58-59, may be compared with 7:161-162. There are two verbal differences. Here (2:58) we have *"enter the* town" and in 7:161 we have "dwell in this town." Again in 2:59 here we have "infringed (Our command)." and in 7:162, we have "transgressed." The verbal differences make no difference to the sense.

59. But the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given them; so We sent on the transgressors a plague from heaven, for that they infringed (Our command) repeatedly.

60. And remember Moses prayed for water for his people; We said: "Strike the rock with thy staff." Then gushed forth therefrom twelve springs. Each group(73) knew its own place for water. So eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah, and do no evil nor mischief on the (face of the) earth.

73 Here we have a reference to the tribal organization of the Jews, which played a great part in their forty-years' march through the Arabian deserts (Num. 1 and 2) and their subsequent settlement in the land of Canaan (Josh. 13 and 14). The twelve tribes were derived from the sons of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (soldier of Allah) after he had wrestled, says Jewish tradition, with Allah (Genesis 32:28). Israel had twelve sons (Gen. 35:22-26), including Levi and Joseph. The descendants of these twelve sons were the "Children of Israel." Levi's family got the priesthood and the care of the Tabernacle; they were exempted from military duties, for which the census was taken (Num. 1:47-53), and therefore from the distribution of Land in Canaan (Josh. 14:3); they were distributed among all the Tribes, and were really a privileged caste and not numbered among the Tribes; Moses and Aaron belonged to the house of Levi. On the other hand Joseph, on account of the high position to which he rose in Egypt as the Pharaoh's minister, was the progenitor of two tribes, one in the name of each of his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Thus there were twelve Tribes in all, as Levi was cut out and Joseph represented two tribes. Their having fixed stations and watering places in camp and fixed territorial areas later in the Promised Land prevented confusion and mutual jealousies and is pointed to as an evidence of the Providence of Allah acting through His Prophet Moses. *Cf.* also 7:160. The gushing of twelve springs from a rock evidently refers to a local tradition well known to Jews and Arabs in Al Mustafa's time. Near Horeb close to Mount Sinai, where the Law was given to Moses, is a huge mass of red granite, twelve feet high and about fifty feet in circumference, where European travellers *(e.g.,* Breydenbach in the 15th Century after Christ saw abundant springs of water twelve in number (see Sale's notes on this passage). It existed in Al Mustafa's time and may still exist to the present day, for anything we know to the contrary. The Jewish tradition would be based on Exod. 17:6: "Thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it that the people may drink." The story is used as a parable, as is clear from the latter part of the verse. In the desolation and among the rocks of this life people grumble. But they will not be left starving or thirsty of spiritual life. Allah's Messenger can provide abundant spiritual sustenance even from such unpromising things as the hard rocks of life. And all the nations can be grouped round it, each different, yet each in perfect order and discipline. We are to use with gratitude all spiritual food and drink provided by Allah, and He sometimes provides from unexpected places. We must restrain ourselves from mischief, pride, and every kind of evil, for our higher life is based on our probation on this very earth.

61. And remember ye said: "O Moses! we cannot endure one kind of food (always); so beseech thy Lord for us to produce for us of what the earth groweth, -its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, Its garlic, lentils, and onions." He said: "Will ye exchange the better for the worse? Go ye down to any town(74), and ye shall find what ye want!" They were covered with humiliation(75) and misery; they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah. This because they went on rejecting the Signs of Allah and slaying His Messengers without just cause. This because they rebelled and went on transgressing.

74 The declension of the word *Misr* in the Arabic text here shows that it is treated as a common noun meaning any town, but this is not conclusive, and the reference may be to the Egypt of Pharaoh. The *Tanwin* expressing indefiniteness may mean "any Egypt ", *i.e.,* any country as fertile as Egypt . There is here a subtle reminiscence as well as a severe reproach. The rebellious children of Israel murmured at the sameness of the food they got in the desert. They were evidently hankering after the delicacies of the Egypt which they had left, although they should have known that the only thing certain for them in Egypt was their bondage and harsh treatment. Moses's reproach to them was twofold: (1) Such variety of foods you can get in any town: would you, for their sake, sell your freedom? Is not freedom better than delicate food? (2) In front of the rich Promised Land, which you are reluctant to march to; behind is Egypt , the land of bondage. Which is better? Would you exchange the better for the worse?

75 From here the argument becomes more general. They got the Promised Land. But they continued to rebel against Allah. And their humiliation and misery became a national disaster. They were carried in captivity to Assyria . They were restored under the Persians, bus still remained under the Persian yoke, and they were under the yoke of the Greeks, the Romans, and Arabs. They were scattered all over the earth, and have been a wandering people ever since, because they rejected faith, slew Allah's messengers, and went on transgressing. The slaving of the Prophets begins with the murder of Abel, who was in the ancestry of Israel . The elder sons of Jacob attempted the murder of Joseph when they dropped him into the well, and if he was afterwards rescued by strangers, their blood-guilt was none the less. In later history they attempted to slay Jesus, in as much as they got the Roman Governor to crucify one in his likeness, and they attempted to take the life of Mustafa. But the moral goes wider than the Children of Israel. It applies to all nations and all individuals. If they are stiff-necked, if they set a greater value on perishable goods than on freedom and eternal salvation, if they break the law of Allah and resist His grace, their portion must be humiliation and misery in the spiritual world and probably even on this earth if a long view is taken.

62. Those who believe (in the Qur´an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians(76),- any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve(77).

76 Latest researches have revealed a small remnant of a religious community numbering about 2,000 souls in Lower Iraq, near Basra . In Arabic they are called *Subbi* (plural *Subba).* They are also called Sabians and Nasoraeans, or

Mandaeans, or Christians of St. John. They claim to be Gnostics, or Knowers of the Great Life. They dress in white, and believe in frequent immersions in water. Their Book Ginza is in a dialect of Aramaic. They have theories of Darkness and Light as in Zoroastrianism, They use the name *Yardan* (Jordan) for any river. They live in peace and harmony among their Muslim neighbours. They resemble the Sabi'un mentioned in the Qur'an, but are not probably identical with them. The pseudo-Sabians of Harran , who attracted the attention of Khalifah Ma'munal Rashid in 830 A.C. by their long hair and peculiar dress probably adopted the name as it was mentioned in the Qur'an, in order to claim the privileges of the People of the Book. They were Syrian Star-worshippers with Hellenistic tendencies, like the Jews contemporary with Jesus. There was another people called the Sabaens, who played an importantpartin the history of early early Arabia , and are known through their inscriptions in an alphabet allied to the Phoenician and Babylonian. They had a flourishing kingdom in the Yemen tract in South Arabia about 800-700 B.C., though their origin may have been in North Arabia . They worshipped the planets and stars (Moon, Sun, Venus). Probably the Queen of Sheba is connected with them. They succumbed to Abyssinia about 350 AC. and to Persia about 579 A.C. Their capital was near San'a . They had beautiful stone buildings, in which the pointed arch is noticeable. *Cf.* 5:69 and n. 779. (See E.B. on Sabaeans.) (R).

77 *Cf.* 2:38, where the same phrase occurs. And it recurs again and again afterwards. The point of the verse is that Islam does not teach an exclusive doctrine, and is not meant exclusively for one people. The Jews claimed this for themselves, and the Christians in their origin were a sect of the Jews. Even the modern organized Christian churches, though they have been, consciously or unconsciously, influenced by the Time Spirit, including the historical fact of Islam, yet cling to the idea of Vicarious Atonement, which means that all who do not believe in it or who lied previously to the death of Christ are at a disadvantage spiritually before the Throne of Allah. The attitude of Islam is entirely different. Islam existed before the preaching of Muhammad on this earth: the Qur'an expressly calls Abraham a Muslim (3:67). Its teaching (submission to Allah's will) has been and will be the teaching of Religion for all time and for all peoples.

63. And remember We took your covenant and We raised above you (The towering height) of Mount (Sinai)(78) : (Saying): "Hold firmly to what We have given you and bring (ever) to remembrance what is therein: Perchance ye may fear Allah."

78 The Mountain of Sinai *(Tural* 5mm), a prominent mountain in the Arabian desert, in the peninsula between the two arms of the Red Sea . Here the Ten Commandments and the Law were given to Moses. Hence it is now called the Mountain of Moses *(Jabal Musa).* The Israelites encamped at the foot of it for nearly a year. The Covenant was taken from them under many portents (Exods. 19:5, 8, 16, 18), which are described in Jewish tradition in great detail. Under thunder and lightning the mountain must indeed have appeared an awe-inspiring sight above to the Camp at its foot. And the people solemnly entered into the Covenant: all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do:" *(Cf.* 7:171, n. 705, and n. 97).

64. But ye turned back thereafter: Had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of Allah to you, ye had surely been among the lost.

65. And well ye knew those amongst you who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath: We said to them: "Be ye apes, despised and rejected(79)."

79 The punishment for breach of the Sabbath under the Mosaic law was death. "Every one that defileth it (the Sabbath) shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people": (Exod, 31:14). There must have been a Jewish tradition about a whole fishing community in a seaside town, which persisted in breaking the Sabbath and were turned into apes: (*Cf.* 7:163-166).

66. So We made it an example to their own time and to their posterity, and a lesson to those who fear Allah.

67. And remember Moses said to his people: "(Allah) commands that ye sacrifice a heifer(80)." They said: "Makest thou a laughing-stock of us?" He said: "(Allah) save me from being an ignorant (fool)!"

80 This story or parable of the heifer in 2:67-71 should be read with the parable of the dead man brought to life in 2:72-73. The stories were accepted in Jewish traditions, which are themselves based on certain sacrificial directions in the Old Testament. The heifer story of Jewish tradition is based on Num. 19:1-10, in which Moses and Aaron ordered the Israelites to sacrifice a red heifer without spot or blemish; her body was to be burnt and the ashes were to be kept for the purification of the congregation from sin. The parable of the dead man we shall refer to later.

The lesson of the heifer parable is plain, Moses announced the sacrifice to the Israelites, and they treated it as a jest. When Moses continued solemnly to ask for the sacrifice, they put him off on one pretext and another, asking a number of questions which they could have answered themselves if they had listened to Moses's directions. Their questions were carping criticisms rather than the result of a desire for information. It was a mere thin pretence that they were genuinely seeking for guidance. When at last they were driven into a corner, they made the sacrifice, but the will was wanting, which would have made the sacrifice efficacious for purification from sin. The real reason for their prevarications was their guilty conscience, as we see in the parable of the dead man (2:72-73).

68. They said: "Beseech on our behalf Thy Lord to make plain to us what (heifer) it is!" He said; "He says: The heifer should be neither too old nor too young, but of middling age. Now do what ye are commanded!"

69. They said: "Beseech on our behalf Thy Lord to make plain to us Her colour." He said: "He says: A fawn-coloured heifer, pure and rich in tone, the admiration of beholders!"

70. They said: "Beseech on our behalf Thy Lord to make plain to us what she is: To us are all heifers alike: We wish indeed for guidance, if Allah wills."

71. He said: "He says: A heifer not trained to till the soil or water the fields; sound and without blemish." They said: "Now hast thou brought the truth." Then they offered her in sacrifice, but not with good-will.

72. Remember ye slew a man(81) and fell into a dispute among yourselves as to the crime: But Allah was to bring forth what ye did hide.

81 In Deut. 21:1-9 it is ordained that if the body of a slain man be found in a field and the slayer is not known, a heifer shall he beheaded, and the elders of the city next to the slain man's domicile shall wash their hands over the heifer and say that they neither did the deed nor saw it done, thus clearing themselves from the blood-guilt.

The Jewish story based on this was that in a certain case of this kind, every one tried to clear himself of guilt and lay the blame at the door of others. In the first place they tried to prevaricate and prevent a heifer being slain as in the last parable. When she was slain, Allah by a miracle disposed the real person. A portion of the sacrificed heifer was ordered to be placed on the corpse, which came to life and disclosed the whole story of the crime.

The lesson of this parable is that men may try to hide their crime individually or collectively, but Allah will bring them to light in unexpected ways. Applying this further to Jewish national history, the argument is developed in the following verses that the Children of Israel played fast and loose with their own rites and traditions, but they could not thus evade the consequences of their own sin.

73. So We said: "Strike the (body) with a piece of the (heifer)." Thus Allah bringeth the dead to life and showeth you His Signs: Perchance ye may understand.

74. Thenceforth were your hearts hardened: They became like a rock and even worse in hardness. For among rocks there are some from which rivers gush forth; others there are which when split asunder send forth water; and others which sink for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unmindful of what ye do(82).

82 The sinner's heart gets harder and harder. It is even harder than rocks, of which a beautiful poetical allegory is placed before us. In nature we think there is nothing harder than rocks. But there are rocks that weep voluntarily, like repentant hearts that come to Allah of their own accord. Such are the rocks from which rivers and springs flow spontaneously, sometimes in small trickles, sometimes in big volumes. Then there are rocks which have to be split or dug into or blown up with dynamite, and underneath we find abundant waters, as in wells beneath rocky soil. Such are the hearts of a less degree of fineness, which yet melt into tears when some great blow or calamity calls the mind so higher things. (R).

75. Can ye (o ye men of Faith) entertain the hope that they will believe in you?- Seeing that a party of them heard the Word of Allah, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it.

76. Behold! when they meet(83) the men of Faith, they say: "We believe": But when they meet each other in private, they say: "Shall you tell them what Allah hath revealed to you, that they may engage you in argument about it before your Lord?"- Do ye not understand (their aim)?

83 The immediate argument applies so the Jews of Mad i nah, but the more general argument applies to the people of Faith and the people without Faith, as we shall see below. If the Muslims of Madinah ever entertained the hope that the Jews in their city would, as a body, welcome Muhammad Mustafa as the Prophet prophesied in their own books, they were mistaken. In Deut. 18:18, they read: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like onto thee," *(i.e.,* like unto Moses); which was interpreted by some of their doctors as referring to Muhammad, and they came into Islam. The Arabs are a kindred branch of the Semitic family, and are correctly described in relation so the Jews as, "their brethren"; and there is no question that there was not another Prophet "like unto Moses" until Muhammad came; in fact the postscript of Deuteronomy, which was written many centuries after Moses, says: "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord Knew face to face." But the Jews as a body were jealous of Muhammad, and played a double part. When the Muslim community began to grow stronger they pretended to be of them, but really tried to keep back any knowledge of their own Scriptures from them, lest they should be beaten by their own arguments.

The more general interpretation holds good in all ages, Faith and Unfaith are pitted against each other. Faith has to struggle against power, position, organization, and privilege. When it gains ground, Unfaith comes forward insincerely and claims fellowship. But in its own mind it is jealous of the armoury of science and knowledge which Faith brings into the service of Allah. But Allah knows all, and if the people of Faith will only seek knowledge sincerely wherever they can find it-even as far afield as China , as Muhammad said, they can defeat Unfaith on its own ground. [Even though the directive that Muslims should derive knowledge regardless of its location is so acceptable proposition from the Islamic viewpoint, the tradition to which the author refers here is not authentic. (Eds.)]

77. Know they not that Allah knoweth what they conceal and what they reveal?

78. And there are among them(84) illiterates, who know not the Book, but (see therein their own) desires, and they do nothing but conjecture.

84 The argument of 2:76 is continued. The Jews wanted to keep back knowledge, but what knowledge had they? Many of them, even if they could read, were no better than illiterates, for they knew not their own true Scriptures, but read into them what they wanted, or at best their own conjectures. They palmed off their own writings for the Message of Allah. Perhaps it brought them profit for the time being: but it was a miserable profit if they "gained the whole world and lost their own souls" (Matt. 16:26). "Writing with their own hands" means inventing books themselves, which had no divine authority.

The general argument is similar. Unfaith erects its own false gods. It attributes things to causes which only exist in its own imagination. Sometimes it even indulges in actual dishonest traffic in the ignorance of the multitude. It may pay for a time, but the bubble always bursts.

79. Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say:"This is from Allah," to traffic with it for miserable price!- Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby.

80. And they say: "The Fire(85) shall not touch us but for a few numbered days:" Say: "Have ye taken a promise from Allah, for He never breaks His promise? or is it that ye say of Allah what ye do not know?"

85 The Jews, in their arrogance might say: Whatever the terror of Hell may be for other people, our sins will be forgiven, because we are the children of Abraham; at worst, we shall suffer a short definite punishment and then be restored to the "bosom of Abraham." This bubble is pricked here. Read this verse with 2:81-82.

The general application is also clear. If Unfaith claims some special prerogative, such as race, "civilization," political power, historical experience, and so on, these will not avail in Allah's sight. His promise is sure, but His promise is for those who seek Allah in Faith, and show it in their conduct. *(Cf.* 3:24 and n. 1142).

81. Nay, those who seek gain(86) in evil, and are girt round by their sins,- they are companions of the Fire: Therein shall they abide (For ever).

86 This is many degrees worse than merely falling into evil; it is going out to "earn evil," as the Arabic text has it, *i.e.,* to seek gain in evil. Such a perverse attitude means that the moral and spiritual fortress erected around us by the Grace of Allah is voluntarily surrendered by us and demolished by Evil, which erects its own fortress, so that access to Good may be more and more difficult.

82. But those who have faith and work righteousness, they are companions of the Garden: Therein shall they abide (For ever).

83. And remember We took(87) a covenant from the Children of Israel (to this effect): Worship none but Allah. treat with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need; speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and practise regular charity. Then did ye turn back, except a few among you, and ye backslide (even now).

87 So far from the Covenant being of the kind suggested in 2:80, the real Covenant is about the moral law, which is set out in 2:83. This moral law is universal, and if you break it, no privileges will lighten your punishment or help you in any way (2:86). "Speak fair to the people" not only means outward courtesy from the leaders to the meanest among the people, but the protection of the people from being exploited, deceived, defrauded, or doped with things to lull their intelligence.

84. And remember We took(88) your covenant (to this effect): Shed no blood amongst you, nor turn out your own people from your homes: and this ye solemnly ratified, and to this ye can bear witness.

88 Verse 83 referred to the universal moral law. This verse 84 refers to its application under a special Covenant entered into with the Jews of Mad i nah by the newborn Muslim Commonwealth under its Guide and teacher Muhammad. This Covenant is given in Ibn Hisham's *Sirat al Rasul,* and comments on it will be found in Ameer 'Ali 's *Spirit of Islam* (London , 1922), pp. 57-61. It was entered into in the second year of the Hijrah, and was treacherously broken by the Jews almost immediately afterwards.

85. After this it is ye, the same people, who slay among yourselves, and banish a party of you from their homes; assist (Their enemies) against them, in guilt and rancour; and if they come to you as captives, ye ransom(89) them, though it was not lawful for you to banish them. Then is it only a part of the Book that ye believe in, and do ye reject the rest? but what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life?- and on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty. For Allah is not unmindful of what ye do.

89 I understand "ransom them" here to mean "take ransom for them," though most of the Commentators take it to mean "give ransom for them," Al Mustafa had made a Pact which, if it had been faithfully observed by all parties, would have brought a reign of law and order for Mad in ah. But some of the treacherous Jews never intended to observe its terms. They fought and slew each other and nor only banished those who were obnoxious to them but intrigued with their enemies. If by any chance they came back into their hands as captives, they demanded ransom for them to return to their homes although they had no right to banish them at all. If we understand by "ransom them" pay "ransom for them to release them from the hands of their enemies," it would mean that they did this pious act for show, although they were themselves the authors of their unlawful banishment. I think the former makes better sense.

86. These are the people who buy the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter: their penalty shall not be lightened nor shall they be helped.

87. We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of messengers; We gave Jesus the son of Mary(90) Clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit. Is it that whenever there comes to you a messenger with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are

puffed up with pride?- Some ye called impostors, and others ye slay(91)!

90 As to the birth of Jesus, *Cf.* 19:16-34. Why is he called the "Son of Mary"? What are his clear signs"? What is the "holy spirit" by which he was strengthened? We reserve to a later stage a discussion of the Qur'anic teaching on these questions. See 3:62 n. 401. *(Cf.* 2:253).

91 Notice the sudden transition from the past tense in "some ye *called* imposters" to the present tense in "others ye slay." There is a double significance. First, reviewing the long course of Jewish history, we have come to the time of Jesus: they have often given the lie to Allah's Prophets, and even now they are trying to slay Jesus. Secondly, extending the review of that history to the time of Muhammad, they are even now trying to take the life of that Prophet. This would be literally true at the time the words were promulgated to the people. And this transition leads on naturally to the next verse, which refer to the actual conditions before Muhammad in Mad i nah in the second war of the Hijrah. *(Cf.* 5:70).

Sections 11-13 (2:87-121) refer to the People of the Book generally, Jews and Christians. Even when Moses and the Law of Sinai are referred to, those traditions are common to both Jews and Christians. The argument is about the people who ought to have learnt from previous Revelations and welcomed Muhammad's teaching, and yet they both took up an attitude of arrogant rejection.

88. They say, "Our hearts are the wrappings(92) (which preserve Allah.s Word: we need no more)." Nay, Allah.s curse is on them for their blasphemy(93): Little is it they believe.

92 The Jews in their arrogance claimed that all wisdom and all knowledge of Allah were enclosed in their hearts. But there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in their philosophy. Their claim was not only arrogance but blasphemy. In reality they were men without Faith. (I take *Ghulfun* here to be the plural of *Ghilafun* the wrapping or cover of a book, in which the book is preserved.) *(Cf.* n.1142).

As usual, there is a much wider meaning. How many people at all times and among all nations close their hearts to any extension of knowledge or spiritual influence because of some little fragment which they have got and which they think is the whole of Allah's Truth? Such an attitude shows really want of faith and is a blasphemous limitation of Allah's unlimited spiritual gifts to His creatures. [According to another view, the verse refers to the Jewish claim that a covering had been placed over their hearts which prevented them from grasping the message of the Prophet (peace be on him). See Ibn Kathir's commentary on the verse. See also verse 4:155, [Eds.].

93 The root *kafara* has many shades of meaning: (1) to deny Allah's goodness, to be ungrateful, (2) to reject Faith, deny His revelation, (3) to blaspheme, to ascribe some limitation or attribute to Allah which is derogatory to His nature. In a translation, one shade or another must be put forward according to the context, but all are implied. *(Cf.* n.30).

89. And when there comes to them a Book(94) from Allah, confirming what is with them,- although from of old they had prayed for victory against those without Faith,- when there comes to them that which they (should) have recognised, they refuse to believe in it but the curse of Allah is on those without Faith.

94 The Jews, who pretended to be so superior to the people without Faith—the Gentiles—should have been the first to recognize the new Truth—or the Truth renewed—which it was Muh ammad's mission to bring because it was so similar in form and language to what they had already received. But they had more arrogance than faith. It is this want of faith that brings on the curse, *i.e.,* deprives us (if we adopt such an attitude) of the blessings of Allah.

Again the lesson applies to a much wider circle than the Jews. We are all apt, in our perverseness, to reject an appeal from our brother even more summarily than one from an outsider. If we have a glimmering of the truth, we are apt to make ourselves impervious to further truth, and thus lose the benefit of Allah's Grace.

90. Miserable is the price for which they have sold their souls, in that they deny (the revelation) which Allah has sent down, in insolent envy that Allah of His Grace should send it to any of His servants He pleases(95): Thus have they drawn on themselves Wrath upon Wrath. And humiliating is the punishment of those who reject Faith.

95 Racial arrogance made the Jews adverse to the reception of Truth when it came through a servant of Allah, not of their own race. Again the lesson is wider. Is that adverseness unknown in our own times, and among other races? Yet how can a race or a people set bounds to Allah's choice? Allah is the Creator and Cherisher of all races and all worlds. *(Cf.* n.359)

91. When it is said to them, "Believe in what Allah Hath sent down, "they say, "We believe in what was sent down to us:" yet they reject all besides, even if it be Truth confirming what is with them. Say: "Why then have ye slain the prophets of Allah in times gone by, if ye did indeed believe(96)?"

96 Even the race argument is often a flimsy and hollow pretext Did not the Jews reject Prophets of their own race who told them unpleasant truths? And do not other nations do likewise? The real trouble is selfishness, narrowness, a mean dislike of anything which runs counter to habits, customs or inclinations.

92. There came to you Moses with clear (Signs); yet ye worshipped the calf (Even) after that, and ye did behave wrongfully.

93. And remember We took your covenant and We raised above you (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai): (Saying): "Hold firmly to what We have given you, and hearken (to the Law)(97)": They said:" We hear, and we disobey(98):" And they had to drink(99) into their hearts (of the taint) of the calf because of their Faithlessness. Say: "Vile indeed are the behests of your Faith if ye have any faith!"

97 *Cf.* the introductory words of 2:63, which are the same as the introductory words here, but the argument is developed in a different direction in the two places. In 2:63, after they are reminded of the solemn Covenant under the towering height of Mount Sinai they are told how they broke the Covenant in after ages Here, after they are reminded of the same solemn Covenant, they are told that even then they never meant to observe it. Their thought is expressed in biting words of sarcasm. They said in words: "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do" But they said in their hearts: "We shall disobey."

98 What they should have said was: "We hear and we obey": this is the attitude of the true men of Faith (2:285). *(Cf.* 2:285, 8:21 , and 24:51).

99 After the Commandments and the Law had been given at Mount Sinai, and the people had solemnly given their Covenant,. Moses went up to the Mount, and in his absence, the people made the golden calf. [The word *ushribu* which occurs in the verse seems to suggest, as the noted Tabi'i Qatadah is reported to have said, that their hearts were saturated with the love for the calf. See Ibn Kathir, Commentary on the verse 2:93, (Eds.)]

94. Say: "If the last Home, with Allah, be for you specially, and not for anyone else, then seek ye for death, if ye are sincere."

95. But they will never seek for death, on account of the (sins) which their hands have sent on before them(100). and Allah is well-acquainted with the wrong-doers.

100 The phrase "What their hands have sent on before them" frequently occurs in the Qur'an. Here and in many places, it refers to sins. In such passages as 78:40 or 81:14, it is implied that both good and bad deeds go before us to the Judgement Seat of Allah before we do ourselves. In 2:110, it is the good that goes before us. Our deeds are personified. They are witnesses for or against us, and they always go before us. Their good or bad influence begins to operate before we even know it. This is more general than the New Testament idea in the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, 5:24 : "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgement; and some men they follow after." (*Cf.* 3:182 and n. 225)

96. Thou wilt indeed find them, of all people, most greedy of life,-even more than the idolaters: Each one of them wishes He could be given a life of a thousand years: But the grant of such life will not save him from (due) punishment. For Allah sees well all that they do.

97. Say: Whoever is an enemy(101) to Gabriel-for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah.s will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe,-

101 A party of the Jews in the time of Muhammad ridiculed the Muslim belief that Gabriel brought down revelations to Muhammad Al Mustafa. Michael was called in their books "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people": (Daniel, 12:1). The vision of Gabriel inspired fear (Daniel, 13:16 -17). But this pretence-that Michael was their friend and Gabriel their enemy-was merely a manifestation of their unbelief in angels, Prophets and Allah Himself; and such unbelief could not win the love of Allah. In any case it was disingenuous to say that they believed in one angel and not in another. Muhammad's inspiration was through visions of Gabriel. Muhammad had been helped to the highest spiritual light, and the message which he delivered and his spodess integrity and exemplary life were manifest Signs which every one could understand except those who were obstinate and perverse. Besides, the verses of the Qur'an were in themselves reasonable and clear.

98. Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and messengers, to Gabriel and Michael,- Lo! Allah is an enemy to those who reject Faith.

99. We have sent down to thee Manifest Signs (ayat); and none reject them but those who are perverse.

100. Is it not (the case) that every time they make a covenant, some party among them throw it aside?- Nay, Most of them are faithless.

101. And when there came to them a messenger from Allah, confirming what was with them, a party of the people of the Book threw away the Book of Allah(102) behind their backs, as if (it had been something) they did not know!

102 I think that by "the Book of Allah" here is meant, not the Qur'an, but the Book which the People of the Book had been given, *viz.,* the previous Revelations. The argument is that Muhammad's Message was similar to Revelations which they had already received, and if they had looked into their own Books honestly and sincerely, they would have found proofs in them to show that the new Message was true and from Allah. But they ignored their own Books or twisted or distorted them according to their own fancies. Worse, they followed something which was actually false and mischievous and inspired by the evil one. Such was the belief in magic and sorcery. These are described in the next verse in terms referring to the beliefs and practices of the "People of the Book." (*Cf.* 3:187).

102. They followed what the evil ones(103) gave out (falsely) against the power of Solomon: the blasphemers Were, not Solomon, but the evil ones, teaching men Magic, and such things as came down at babylon to the angels Harut and Marut(104). But neither of these taught anyone (Such things) without saying: "We are only for trial; so do not blaspheme." They learned from them(105) the means to sow discord between man and wife. But they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah.s permission. And they learned what harmed them, not what profited them. And they knew that the buyers of (magic) would have no share in the happiness of the Hereafter. And vile was the price for which they did sell their souls, if they but knew!

103 . This is a continuation of the argument in 2:101. The People of the Book, instead of sticking to the plain Books of Revelations, and seeking to do the will of Allah, ran after all sorts of occult knowledge, most of which was false and evil. Many wonderful tales of occult power attributed the power of Solomon to magic. But Solomon dealt in no arts of evil. It was the powers of evil that pretended to force the laws of nature and the will of Allah; such a pretence is plainly blasphemy.

104 Harut and Marut lived in Babylon , a very ancient seat of science, especially the science of astronomy. The period may be supposed to be anywhere about the time when the ancient Eastern Monarchies were strong and enlightened: probably even earlier, as Marutu or Marduk was a deified hero afterwards worshipped as a god of magic in Babylon . Being good men, Harut and Marut of course dabbled in nothing evil, and their hands were certainly clean of fraud. But knowledge and the arts, if learned by evil men, can be applied to evil uses . The evil ones, besides their fraudulent magic, also learnt a little of this true science and applied it to evil uses. Harut and Marut did not withhold knowledge, yet never taught anyone without plainly warning them of the trial and temptation of knowledge in the hands of evil men. Being men of insight, they also saw the blasphemy that might rise to the lips of the evil ones puffed up with science and warned them against it. Knowledge is indeed a trial or temptation: if we are warned, we know its dangers: if Allah has endowed us with free will, we must be free to choose between the benefit and the danger.

Among the Jewish traditions in the Midrash (Jewish *Tafsirs)* was a story of two angels who asked Allah's permission to come down to earth but succumbed to temptation, and were hung up by their feet at Babylon for punishment. Such stories about sinning angels who were cast down to punishment were believed in by the early Christians also. (See the Second Epistle of Peter 2:4, and the Epistle of Jude, verse 6). (R).

105 What the evil ones learnt from Harut and Marut (see last note) they turned to evil. When mixed with fraud and deception, it appeared as charms and spells and love potions. They did nothing but cause discord between the sexes. But of course their power was limited to the extent to which Allah permitted the evil to work, for His grace protected all who sought His guidance and repented and returned to Him. But apart from the harm that these false pretenders might do to others, the chief harm which they did was to their own souls. They sold themselves into slavery to the Evil One, as is shown in the allegory of Goethe's *Faust.* That allegory dealt with the individual soul. Here the tragedy is shown to occur not only to individuals but to whole groups of people, for example, the People of the Book. Indeed the story might be extended indefinitely.

103. If they had kept their Faith and guarded themselves from evil, far better had been the reward from their Lord, if they but knew!

104. O ye of Faith! Say not (to the Messenger. words of ambiguous import(106), but words of respect; and hearken (to him): To those without Faith is a grievous punishment.

106 The word disapproved is *Ra'ina ,* which as used by the Muslims meant "Please look at us, attend to us." but it was ridiculed by enemies by a little twist to suggest some insulting meaning. So an unambiguous word "Unzurna ," with the same meaning is suggested. The general lesson is that we must guard ourselves against the cynical trick of using words which sound complimentary to the ear but have a hidden barb in them. Not only must we be plain and honest in our words. We must respectfully hearken to the words of a Teacher whom we have addressed. Thoughdess people use vain words or put foolish questions, and straightaway turn their minds to something else. *(Cf.* n.566 and n. 5343)

105. It is never the wish of those without Faith among the People of the Book, nor of the Pagans, that anything good should come down to you from your Lord. But Allah will choose for His special Mercy whom He will - for Allah is Lord of grace abounding.

106. None of Our revelations(107) do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?

107 The word which I have translated by the word "revelations" is Ayat. See C. 42 and n. 15. It is not only used for verses of the Qur'an, but in a general sense for Allah's revelations, as in 2:39 and for other Signs of Allah in history or nature, or miracles, as in 2:61. It has even been used for human signs and tokens of wonder, as, for example, monuments or landmarks built by the ancient people of 'Ad (26:128). What is the meaning here? If we take it in a general sense, it means that Allah's Message from age to age is always the same, but that its form may differ according to the needs and exigencies of the time. That form was different as given to Moses and then to Jesus and then to Muhammad. Some commentators apply it also to the Ay at of the Qur'an. There is nothing derogatory in this if we believe in progressive revelation. In 3:7 we are told distinctly about the Qur'an, that some of its verses are clear (and of established meaning), and others are not entirely clear, and it is mischievous to treat the verses that are not entirely clear and to follow them (literally). On the other hand, it is absurd to treat such a verse as 2:115 as if it were abrogated by 2:144 about Qiblah.

There may be express abrogation, or there may be "causing or permitting to forget." How many good and wise institutions gradually become obsolete by afflux of time? Then there is the gradual process of disuse or forgetting in evolution. This does not mean that eternal principles change. It is only a sign of Allah's infinite power that His creation should take so many forms and shapes not only in the material world but in the world of man's thought and expression.

107. Knowest thou not that to Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth? And besides Him ye have neither patron nor helper.

108. Would ye question your Messenger as Moses(108) was questioned of old? but whoever changeth from Faith to Unbelief, Hath strayed without doubt from the even way(109).

108 Moses was constantly harassed with foolish, impertinent, or disingenuous questions by his own people. We must not follow that bad example. In spiritual matters, posers do no good: questions should be asked only for real instruction.

109 "Even way": the Arabic word *saw a* 'a signifies smoothness as opposed to roughness; symmetry as opposed to want of plan; equality or proportion as opposed to want of design; rectitude as opposed to crookedness; a mean as opposed to extremes; and fitness for the object held in view as opposed to faultiness. *(Cf.* n .711).

109. Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could Turn you (people) back to infidelity after ye have believed, from selfish envy, after the Truth hath become Manifest unto them: But forgive and overlook(110), Till Allah accomplish His purpose; for Allah Hath power over all things(112).

110 Three words are used in the Qur'an, with a meaning akin to "forgive", but each with a different shade of meaning. *'Afa* (here translated "forgive") means to forget, to obliterate from one's mind. *Safaha* (here translated "overlook") means to turn away from, to ignore, to treat a matter as if it did not affect one. *Ghafara* (which does not occur in this verse) means to cover up something as Allah does to our sins with His grace: this word is particularly appropriate in Allah's attribute to *Ghaffar.* the One who forgives again and again.

112 Note how this phrase, seemingly repeated from 2:106 and occurring in many other places, has an appropriate signification in each place. In 2:106 we were told about progressive revelation, how the same thing may take different forms, and seeming human infirmity contribute to the fulfillment of Allah's design, for Allah's power is unlimited. Here we are told to be patient and forgiving against envy and injustice: this too may be fulfilling Allah's purpose, for His power is infinite.

110. And be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity: And whatever good ye send forth for your souls(113) before you, ye shall find it with Allah. for Allah sees Well all that ye do.

113 *Cf.* 2:95n. 100.

111. And they say: "None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian." Those are their (vain) desires. Say: "Produce your proof if ye are truthful."

112. Nay,-whoever submits His whole self(114) to Allah and is a doer of good,- He will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve(115).

114 The word translated "self is *Wajh,* a comprehensive Arabic word. It means (1) literally face, but it may imply (2) countenance or favour, as in 92:20; (3) honour, glory. Presence as applied to Allah, as in 4:72; (4) cause, sake ("for the sake of) as in 76:8; (5) the first part, the beginning, as in 3:71; (6) nature, inner being, essence, self, as in 5 :111, 27:88, and perhaps also 55:27. Here I understand meaning 6; the face expresses the personality or the whole inner self of man. *(Cf.* 7:29 and n. 1010) (R).

115 This phrase comes in aptly in its own context many times. In this Surah it occurs in 2:38 , 62, 112, 262,274. and 277. (R).

113. The Jews say: "The Christians have naught (to stand) upon; and the Christians say: "The Jews have naught (To stand) upon." Yet they (Profess to) study the (same) Book. Like unto their word is what those say who know not(116); but Allah will judge between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgment.

116 It is a sure sign of ignorance and prejudice when you study the same book as another or a similar one and yet are absolutely intolerant of the meaning which the other draws from it. You should know better, but you speak like the ignorant. In this case the primary reference in the word "ignorant" may be to the Pagan Arabs.

114. And who is more unjust than he who forbids(117) that in places for the worship of Allah, Allah.s name should be celebrated?-whose zeal is (in fact) to ruin them? It was not fitting that such should themselves enter them except in fear. For them there is nothing but disgrace in this world, and in the world to come, an exceeding torment.

117 There were actually Pagans in Makkah who tried to shut out Muslim Arabs from the Ka'bah, the universal place of Arab worship. The Pagans themselves called it the House of Allah. With what face could they exclude the Muslims, who wanted to worship the true Allah instead of worshipping idols? If these Pagans had succeeded, they would only have caused violent divisions among the Arabs and destroyed the sanctity and the very existence of the Ka'bah. This verse, taken in a general sense, establishes the principle of freedom of worship in a public mosque or place dedicated to the worship of Allah. This is recognised in Muslim law. (R).

115. To Allah belong the east and the West: Whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance(118). For Allah is all-Embracing, all-Knowing.

118 That is, you will face Allah whichsoever direction you turn your face. See note 2:112 above. (R).

116. They say: "(Allah) hath begotten a son" :Glory be to Him.-Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: everything renders worship to Him(119).

119 It is a derogation from the glory of Allah-in fact it is blasphemy — to say that Allah begets sons, like a man or an animal. The Christian doctrine is here emphatically repudiated. If words have any meaning, it would mean an attribution to Allah of a material nature, and of the lower animal functions of sex. (R). (*Cf* .39:4).

117. To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth(120): When He decreeth a matter, He saith to it: "Be," and it is.

120 The previous verse told us that everything in heaven and earth celebrates the glory of Allah. Lest anyone should think that the heavens and the earth were themselves primeval and eternal, we are now told that they themselves are creatures of Allah's will and design. *Cf.* 6:102, where the word *bada'a* is used as here for the creation of the heavens and the earth, and *kh alaqa* is used for the creation of all things. *Bada'a* goes back to the very primal beginning, as far as we can conceive it. The materialists might say that primeval matter was eternal: other things, *i.e.,* the forms and shapes as we see them now, were called into being at some time or other, and will perish. When they perish, they dissolve into primeval matter again, which stands at the base of all existence. We go further back. We say that if we postulate such primeval matter, it owes its origin itself to Allah, Who is the final basis of existence, the Cause of all Causes. If this is conceded, we proceed to argue that the process of Creation is not then completed. "All things in the heavens and on the earth" are created by gradual processes. In "things" we include abstract as well as material things. We see the abstract things and ideas actually growing before us. But that also is Allah's creation, to which we can apply the *word khalaqa,* for in it is involved the idea of measuring, fitting it into a scheme of other things. *Cf.* 54:49; also 25:59. Here comes in what we know as the process of evolution. On the other hand, the *"amr"* (=Command, Direction, Design) is a single thing, unrelated to Time, "like the twinkling of an eye" (54:50). Another word to note in this connection *is ja'ala* "making" which seems to imply new shapes and forms, new dispositions, as the making of the Signs of the Zodiac in the heavens, or the setting out of the sun and moon for light, or the establishment of the succession of day and night (25:61-62). A Further process with regard to the soul is described in the word *saww a ,* bringing it to perfection (91:7) but this we shall discuss in its place. *Fatara* (42:11) implies, like *bada'a,* * ' the creating of a thing out of nothing and after no pre-existing similitude, but perhaps *fatara* implies the creation of primeval matter to which further processes have to be applied later, as when one prepares dough but leaves the leavening to be done after. *Badaa* , 30:27, implies beginning the process of creation: this is made further clear in 32:7 where the beginning of the creation of pristine man from clay refers to his physical body, leaving the further processes of reproduction and the breathing in of the soul to be described in subsequent verses. Lastly, *bara'a* is creation implying liberation from pre-existing matter or circumstance, *e.g.,* man's body from clay (59:24) or a calamity from previously existing circumstances (57:22). See also 6:94 n. 916; 6:98 n. 923; 59:24 nn. 5405-6. (Ed.)

118. Say those without knowledge: "Why speaketh not Allah unto us? or why cometh not unto us a Sign?" So said the people before them words of similar import. Their hearts are alike. We have indeed made clear the Signs unto any people who hold firmly to Faith (in their hearts).

119. Verily We have sent thee in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner: But of thee no question shall be asked of the Companions of the Blazing Fire.

120. Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion. Say: "The Guidance of Allah,-that is the (only) Guidance." Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither Protector nor helper against Allah.

121. Those to whom We have sent the Book study it as it should be studied: They are the ones that believe therein: Those who reject faith therein,- the loss is their own.

122. O Children of Israel! call to mind the special favour which I bestowed upon you, and that I preferred you to all others (for My Message).

123. Then guard yourselves against a-Day when one soul shall not avail another, nor shall compensation be accepted from her nor shall intercession profit her nor shall anyone be helped (from outside)(122).

122 Verses 122-123 repeat verses 47-48 (except for a slight verbal variation in 2:123, which does not affect the sense). The argument about the favours to Israel is thus beautifully rounded off, and we now proceed to the argument in favour of the Arabs as succeeding to the spiritual inheritance of Abraham. *(Cf.* 2:254).

124. And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands(123), which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imam(124) to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers."

123 *Kalimat* literally "words": here used in the sense of Allah's Will or Decree or Purpose. This verse may be taken to be the sum of the verses following. In everything Abraham fulfilled Allah's wish: he purified Allah's house; he built the sacred refuge of the Ka'bah; he submitted his will to Allah's, and thus became the type of Islam. He was promised the leadership of the world; he pleaded for his progeny, and his prayer was granted, with the limitation that if his progeny was false to Allah, Allah's promise did not reach the people who proved themselves false.

124 *Imam:* the primary sense is that of being foremost: hence it may mean: (1) leader in religion; (2) leader in congregational prayer; (3) model, pattern, example; (4) a book of guidance and instruction (11:17); (5) a book of evidence or record (36:12). Here, meanings 1 and 3 are implied. In 9:12 the word is applied to leaders of Unbelief or Blasphemy.

125. Remember We made the House(125) a place of assembly for men and a place of safety; and take ye the station of Abraham as a place of prayer; and We covenanted with Abraham and Isma´il, that they should sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or use it as a retreat, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein(126) in prayer).

125 The Ka'bah, the House of Allah. Its foundation goes back by Arab tradition to Abraham. Its fourfold character is here referred to (1) It was the centre to which all the Arab tribes resorted for trade, for poetic contests, and for worship. (2) It was sacred territory, and was respected by friend and foe alike. At certain seasons, all fighting was and is forbidden within its limits, and even arms are not allowed to be carried, and no game or other thing is allowed to be killed. Like the Cities of Refuge under the Mosaic Dispensation, to which manslayers could flee (Num. 35:6), or the Sanctuaries in Mediaeval Europe, to which criminals could not be pursued. Makkah was recognised by Arab custom as inviolable for the pursuit of revenge or violence. (3) It was a place of prayer: even to-day there is a Station of Abraham. (4) It must be held pure and sacred for all purposes.

Though the verse as a whole is expressed in the First Person Plural, the House is called "My House," to emphasise the personal relation of Allah, the One True God, to it, and repudiate the Polytheism which defiled it before it was purified again by Muhammad. (R). *(Cf.* nn.2797-2798).

126 Four rites are here enumerated, which have now acquired a technical meaning. (1) Compassing the sacred territory, or going round the Ka'bah: *Taw a f.* (2) Retiring to the place as a spiritual retreat, for contemplation and prayer: *I'tikaf.* (3) The posture of bending the back in prayer: *Ruku'* (4) The posture of prostrating oneself on the ground in prayer: *Sujud.* The protection of the holy territory is for all, but special cleanliness and purity is required for the sake of the devotees who undertake these rites. (R).

126. And remember Abraham said: "My Lord, make this a City of Peace(127), and feed its people with fruits(128),-such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day." He said: "(Yea), and such as reject Faith,- for a while will I grant them their pleasure, but will soon drive them to the torment of Fire,- an evil destination (indeed)!"

127 The root *salama* in the word Islam implies (among other ideas) the idea of Peace and therefore when Makkah is the city of Islam , it is also the City of Peace . The same root occurs in the latter part of the name Jerusalem , the Jewish City of Peace. When the day of Jerusalem passed (see verse 134 or 141 below). Makkah became the "New Jerusalem" — or rather the old and original "City of Peace " restored and made universal.

128 The territory of Makkah is barren and rocky, compared with, say, Ta'if, a city to the east of Makkah. A prayer for the prosperity of Makkah therefore includes a prayer for the good things of material life. (R).

127. And remember Abraham and Isma´il raised the foundations of the House (With this prayer): "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing.

128. "Our Lord! make of us Muslims, bowing to Thy (Will), and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (will); and show us our place for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in Mercy); for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

129. "Our Lord! send amongst them a Messenger of their own, who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in scripture and wisdom, and sanctify them: For Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise(129)."

129 How beautiful this prayer is, and how aptly it conies in here in the argument! Such Paganism or star-worship or planet-worship as there was in Abraham's time was first cleared out of Makkah by Abraham, This is the chief meaning of "sanctification" or "purification" in 2:125, although of course physical cleanliness is (in physical conditions) a necessary element of purification in the higher sense. Abraham and his elder son Isma'il then built the Ka'bah and established the rites and usages of the sacred city. He was thus the founder of the original Islam (which is as old as mankind) in Arabia . As becomes a devout man, he offers and dedicates the work to Allah in humble supplication, addressing Him as the All-Hearing and the All-Knowing. He then asks for a blessing on himself and progeny generally, both the children of his eldest-born Ism a' il and his younger son Isaac. With prophetic vision he foresees that there will be corruption and backsliding in both branches of his family: Makkah will house 360 idols, Jerusalem will become a harlot city (Ezekiel 16:15), a city of abomination. But the light of Islam will shine, and reclaim the lost people in both branches and indeed in all the world. So he prays for Allah's mercy, addressing Him as the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful. And finally he foresees in Makkah a Prophet teaching the people as one "of their own." and in their own beautiful Arabic language: he asks for a blessing on Muhammad's ministry, appealing to the Power and Wisdom of Allah.

130. And who turns away from the religion of Abraham but such as debase their souls with folly? Him We chose(130) and rendered pure in this world: And he will be in the Hereafter in the ranks of the Righteous.

130 *Istafa* chose: chose because of purity; chose and purified. It is the same root from which *Mustafa* is derived, one of the titles of Muhammad.

131. Behold! his Lord said to him: "Bow (thy will to Me):" He said: "I bow (my will) to the Lord and Cherisher of the Universe."

132. And this was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons, and so did Jacob; "Oh my sons! Allah hath

chosen the Faith for you; then die not except in the Faith of Islam."

133. Were ye witnesses(131) when death appeared before Jacob? Behold, he said to his sons: "What will ye worship after me?" They said: "We shall worship Thy Allah and the Allah of thy fathers(132), of Abraham, Isma´il and Isaac,- the one (True) Allah. To Him we bow (in Islam)."

131 The whole of the Children of Israel are called to witness one of their slogans, that they worshipped "the God of their fathers." The idea in their minds got narrowed down to that of a tribal God. But they are reminded that their ancestors had the principle of Islam in them — the worship of Allah, the One True and Universal God. The death-bed scene is described in Jewish tradition,

132 "Fathers" means ancestors, and includes uncles, grand-uncles, as well as direct ascendants.

134. That was a people that hath passed away. They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and ye of what ye do! Of their merits there is no question in your case(133)!

133 I have made a free paraphrase of what would read literally: 'Ye shall not be asked about what they used to do." On the Day of Judgement each soul would have to answer for its own deeds: it cannot claim merit from others, nor be answerable for the crimes or sins of others- Here the argument is: if the Jews or Christians claim the merits of Father Abraham and the Patriarchs or of Jesus, we cannot follow them. Because there were righteous men in the past, it cannot help us unless we are ourselves righteous. The doctrine of personal responsibility is a cardinal feature of Islam. *(Cf.* n.1895).

135. They say: "Become Jews or Christians if ye would be guided (To salvation)." Say thou: "Nay! (I would rather) the Religion of Abraham the True(134), and he joined not gods with Allah."

134 *Hanif:* inclined to right opinion, orthodox (in the literal meaning of the Greek words.), firm in faith, sound and well-balanced, true. Perhaps the last word, True, sums up most of the other shades.

The Jews, though taught Unity, went after false gods, and the Christians invented the Trinity or borrowed it from Paganism. We go back to pure, han if doctrine of Abraham, to live and die in faith in the One True God.

136. Say ye: "We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma´il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to Allah (in Islam)(135)."

135 Here we have the Creed of Islam: to believe in (1) the One Universal God, (2) the Message to us through Muhammad and the Signs (a*yat)* as interpreted on the basis of personal responsibility, (3) the Message delivered by other Teachers in the past. These are mentioned in three groups: (1) Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes: of these Abraham had apparently a Book (87:19) and the others followed his tradition: (2) Moses and Jesus, who each left a scripture; these scriptures are still extant though not in their pristine form; and (3) other scriptures, Prophets, or Messengers of Allah, not specifically mentioned in the Qur'an (11:78). We make no difference between any of these. Their Message (in essentials) was one, and that is the basis of Islam. *(Cf.* 3:84 and 4:163).

137. So if they believe as ye believe, they are indeed on the right path; but if they turn back, it is they who are in schism; but Allah will suffice thee as against them(136), and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

136 We are thus in the true line of those who follow the one and indivisible Message of the One Allah, wherever delivered. If others narrow it or corrupt it, it is they who have left the faith and created a division or schism. But Allah sees and knows all. And He will protect His own, and His support will be infinitely more precious than the support which men can give.

138. (Our religion is) the Colour of Allah(137): And who can baptize better than Allah. And it is He Whom we worship.

137 *Sibghah:* the root-meaning implies a dye or colour; apparently the Arab Christians mixed a dye or colour in the baptismal water, signifying that the baptized person got a new colour in life. [We do not believe that it is necessary to be baptized to be saved. Eds.].

139. Say: Will ye dispute with us about Allah, seeing that He is our Lord and your Lord; that we are responsible for our doings and ye for yours; and that We are sincere (in our faith) in Him?

140. Or(138) do ye say that Abraham, Isma´il Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: Do ye know better than Allah. Ah! who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from Allah. but Allah is not unmindful of what ye do!

138 The alternative is with the question in the last verse. Do you dispute with us although we worship the same God as you and claim that ours is the same religion as that of your ancestors? Or do you really assert that Abraham and his son and his sons' sons, who founded the Tribes long before Moses, followed your Jewish religion as you know it? History of course proves that claim absurd. If the Christians claim that these Patriarchs knew of and followed the teaching of Jesus, the claim is still more absurd — except in the sense of Islam that Allah's teaching is one in all ages.

141. That was a people that hath passed away. They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and ye of what ye do! Of their merits there is no question in your case(139):

139 Verse 134 began a certain argument, which is now rounded off in the same words in this verse. To use a musical term, the *motif is* now completed. The argument is that it is wrong to claim a monopoly for Allah's Message: it is the same peoples and in all ages: if it undergoes local variations or variations according to times and seasons those variations pass away. This leads to the argument in the remainder of the Surah that with the renewal of the Message and the birth of a new people, a new symbolism and new ordinances become appropriate, and they are now expounded.

142. The fools among the people(140) will say: "What hath turned them from the Qiblah(141) to which they were used?" Say: To Allah belong both east and West: He guideth whom He will to a Way that is straight.

140 *Nas* = People, the unthinking multitude that sway to and fro, instead of being firm in Allah's Way. The reference here is to the idolaters, the Hypocrites, and the party of Jews who were constantly seeking to "entangle in their talk." Al Mustafa and his disciples in Madinah even as the Pharisees and the Sadducees of Jesus's day tried to entangle Jesus (Matt. 22:15 , 23).

141 *Qiblah* = the direction to which Muslims turn in prayer. Islam lays great stress on social prayer in order to emphasise our universal Brotherhood and mutual cooperation. For such prayer, order, punctuality, precision, symbolical postures, and a common direction are essential, so that the Imam (leader) and all his congregation may face one way and offer their supplications to Allah. In the early days, before they were organised as a people, they followed as a symbol for their *Qjhlah* the sacred city of Jerusalem , sacred both to the Jews and the Christians, the people of the Book. This symbolised their allegiance to the continuity of Allah's revelation. When, despised and persecuted, they were turned out of Makkah and arrived in Mad i nah. Al Mustafa under divine direction began to organise its people as an *Ummah,* an independent people, with laws and rituals of their own. At that stage the Ka'bah was established as *Qiblah,* thus going back to the earliest centre, with which the name of Abraham was connected, and traditionally also the name of Adam. Jerusalem still remained (and remains) sacred in the eyes of Islam on account of its past, but Islam is a progressive religion, and its new symbolism enabled it to shake off the tradition of a dead past and usher in the era of untrammeled freedom dear to the spirit of Arabia . The change took place about 16 1/2i months after Hijrah.

143. Thus(142), have We made of you an Ummat justly balanced(143), that ye might be witnesses(144) over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves; and We appointed the Qibla to which thou wast used, only to test those who followed the Messenger from those who would turn on their heels(145) (From the Faith). Indeed it was (A change) momentous, except to those guided by Allah. And never would Allah Make your faith of no effect(146). For Allah is to all people Most surely full of kindness, Most Merciful.

142 *Thus* : By giving you a Qiblah of your own, *most* ancient in history, and *most* modern *as* a symbol of your organisation as a new nation (*Ummah)* .

143 *Justly balanced* : The essence of Islam is to avoid all extravagances on either side. It is a sober, practical religion. But the Arabic word *(wasat)* also implies a touch of the literal meaning of Intermediacy. Geographically, Arabia is in an intermediate position in the Old World , as was proved in history by the rapid expansion of Islam, north, south, west and east.

144 *Witnesses.* When two persons dispute, they advance extravagant claims. A just witness comes between them, and brings the light of reason to bear on them, pruning all their selfish extravagances. So the mission of Islam is to curb, for instance, the extreme formalism of the Mosaic law and the extreme "other-worldliness" professed by Christianity. The witness must be unselfish, equipped with first-hand knowledge, and ready to intervene in the cause of justice. Such is the position claimed by Islam among rival systems. Similarly, within Islam itself, the position of witness to whom disputants can appeal is held by Muhammad Al Mustafa. *(Cf.* 4:135, 5:44 , and 5:8).

145 The Qiblah of Jerusalem might itself have seemed strange to the Arabs, and the change from it to the Ka'bah might have seemed strange after they had become used to the other. In reality one direction or another, or east or west, in itself did not matter. What mattered was the sense of discipline, on which Islam lays so much stress: which of us is willing to follow the directions of the chosen Prophet of Allah? Mere quibblers about non-essential matters are tested by this. (R) .

146 What became of prayer with the Jerusalem Qiblah? It was equally efficacious before the new Qiblah was ordained. Allah regards our faith: every act of true and genuine faith is efficacious with Him, even if formalists pick holes in such acts.

144. We see the turning of thy face (for guidance) To the heavens(147): now Shall We turn thee to a Qiblah that shall please thee. Turn then Thy face in the direction of the sacred Mosque(148): Wherever ye are, turn your faces in that direction. The people of the Book(149) know well that that is the truth from their Lord. Nor is Allah unmindful of what they do.

147 This shows the sincere desire of Al Mustafa to seek light from above in the matter of the Qiblah. Until the organisation of his own People into a well - knit community, with its distinctive laws and ordinances, he followed a practice based on the fact that the Jews and Christians looked upon Jerusalem as a sacred city. But there was no universal Qiblah among them. Some Jews turned towards Jerusalem , especially during the Captivity, as we shall see later. At the time of our Prophet, Jerusalem was in the hands of the Byzantine Empire , which was Christian. But the Christians oriented their churches to the East (hence the word "orientation"), which is a point of the compass, and not the direction of any sacred place. The fact of the altar being in the East does not mean that every worshipper has his face to the east: for, according at least to modern practice, the seats in a church are so placed that different worshippers may face in different directions. The Preacher of Unity naturally wanted, in this as in other matters, a symbol of complete unity, and his heart was naturally delighted when the Qiblah towards the Ka'bah was settled. Its connection with Abraham gave it great antiquity: its character of being an Arab centre made it appropriate when the Message came in Arabic, and was preached through the union of the Arabs; at the time it was adopted, the little Muslim community was shut out of it, being exiles in Mad i nah, but it became a symbol of hope and eventual triumph, of which Muhammad lived to see the fulfillment; and it also became the centre and gathering ground of all peoples in the universal pilgrimage, which was instituted with it.

148 *The Sacred Mosque: i.e.* the mosque wherein the Ka'bah is located, in the sacred city of Makkah . It is not correct to suggest that the command making the Ka'bah the Qiblah abrogates 2:115, where it is stated that East and West belong to Allah. This is perfectly true at all times, before and after the institution of the Qiblah. As if to emphasise this, the same words about East and West are repeated in this very passage, see 2:142 above. Where the *Itqan* mentions *mansukh* in this connection, I am sorry I cannot follow that opinion, unless *mansukh* is defined in a special way, as some of the commentators do. (R).

149 Glimmerings of such a Qiblah were already foreshadowed in Jewish and Christian practice but its universality was only perfected in Islam.

145. Even if thou wert to bring to the people of the Book all the Signs (together), they would not follow Thy Qiblah; nor art thou going to follow their Qiblah; nor indeed will they follow(150) each other´s Qiblah. If thou after the knowledge hath reached thee, Wert to follow their (vain) desires,-then wert thou Indeed (clearly) in the wrong.

150 See n. 147 to 2:144 above.

The Jews and Christians had a glimmering of the Qiblah idea, but in their attitude of self-sufficiency they were not likely to welcome the Qiblah idea as perfected in Islam. Nor is Islam, after the fuller knowledge which it has received, likely to revert to the uncertain, imperfect, and varying ideas of orientation held previously.

A very clear glimpse of the old Jewish practice in the matter of the Qiblah and the importance attached to it is found in the book of Daniel. 6:10. Daniel was a righteous man of princely lineage and lived about 506-538 B.C. He was carried off to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, the Assyrian, but was still living when Assyria was overthrown by the Medes and Persians. In spite of the "captivity" of the Jews, Daniel enjoyed the highest offices of state at Babylon , but he was ever true to Jerusalem . His enemies (under the Persian monarch) got a penal law passed against any one who "asked a petition of any god or man for 30 days" except the Persian King. But Daniel continued true to Jerusalem . "His windows being open in his chamber to wards Jerusalem , he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

146. The people of the Book know this as they know their own sons(151); but some of them conceal the truth which they themselves know.

151 The People of the Book should have known all this as well as "they knew their own sons," as their past traditions and teaching should have made them receptive of the new Message. Some commentators construe the demonstrative pronoun "this" to refer to the Prophet. In that case the interpretation would be: The People of the Book know Muhammad as well as they know their own sons; they know him to be true and upright, they know him to be in the line of Abraham: they know him to correspond to the description of the prophet foretold among themselves; but selfishness induces some of them to act against their own knowledge and conceal the truth.

147. The Truth is from thy Lord(152); so be not at all in doubt.

152 Truth only comes from Allah, and it remains truth, however men might try to conceal it or throw doubts on it.

148. To each is a goal to which Allah(153) turns him; then strive together (as in a race) Towards all that is good. Wheresoever ye are, Allah will bring you Together. For Allah Hath power over all things.

153 The question is how we are to construe the pronoun, *huwa,* in the original. The alternative translation would be: "To each is a goal to which he turns." The simile of life being a race in which we all zealously run forward to the one goal, *viz .,* the goal of good, may be applied individually and nationally. This supplies another argument of the Ka'bah Qiblah, *viz.,* the unity of goal, with diversity of races, traditions and temperaments.

149. From whencesoever Thou startest forth(154), turn Thy face in the direction of the sacred Mosque; that is indeed the truth from the Lord. And Allah is not unmindful of what ye do.

154 The simile of a race is continued, and so the Qiblah command is repeated from that point of view In 2:144 it was mentioned as the new symbol of the new nation (Muslim); now it is shown as the symbol of Good, at which we should all aim, from whichever point we started. *e.g.* as Jews or Christians, or our individual point of view; the Qiblah will unite us as a symbol of the Goal of the Future. In 2:150 below, it is repeated; first for the individual, on the ground of uniformity and the removal of all occasions of dispute and argument; and secondly for the Muslim people, on the same ground, as a matter of discipline. There is another little harmony in the matter of the repetitions. Note that the race and starting point argument begins at 2:149 and is rounded off in the first part of 2:150; while the national and general argument beginning at 2:144 is rounded off in the latter part of 2:150. The latter argument includes the former, and is more widely worded: "wheresoever ye are"; which in the Arabic expression would imply three things: in whatever circumstances ye are, or at whatever time ye are, or in whatever place ye are. I have spoken before of a sort of musical harmony in verbal repetitions: here there is a sort of pictorial harmony, as of a larger circle symmetrically including a smaller concentric circle.

150. So from whencesoever Thou startest forth, turn Thy face in the direction of the sacred Mosque; and wheresoever ye are, Turn your face thither: that there be no ground of dispute against you among the people, except those of them that are bent on wickedness; so fear them not, but fear Me; and that I may complete My favours on you, and ye May (consent to) be guided;

151. A similar (favour have ye already received)(155) in that We have sent among you a Messenger of your own, rehearsing to you Our Signs, and sanctifying you, and instructing you in Scripture and Wisdom, and in new knowledge.

155 This verse should be read with 2:150, of which the sentence is here completed. The argument is that in the grant of the Ka'bah Qiblah, Allah was perfecting religion and fulfilling the prayer for the future made by Abraham. That prayer was threefold: (1) That Makkah should be a sacred Sanctuary (2:126): (2) that a truly believing (Muslim) nation should be raised, with places of devotion there (2:128); and (3) that a Messenger should be sent among the Arabs with certain qualities (2:129), which are set out there and again repeated here to complete the argument.

152. Then do ye remember(156) Me; I will remember you. Be grateful to Me, and reject not Faith.

156 The word "remember" is too pale a word for *dh ikr,* which has now acquired a large number of associations in our religious literature. In its verbal signification it implies; to remember; to praise by frequently mentioning; to rehearse; to celebrate or commemorate; to make much of; to cherish the memory of as a precious possession. (R). (Cf: 2:31).

153. O ye who believe! seek help with patient perseverance(157) and prayer; for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.

157 See 2:45 and n. 61. An additional meaning implied in *sabr* is self-restraint. Haqq a ni defines it in his *Tafsir* as following Reason and restraining Fear, Anger, and Desire. What can be a higher reward for patience, perseverance, self-restraint and constancy than that Allah should be with us? For this promise opens the door to every kind of spiritual well-being. *(Cf.* n.158 and n. 1877).

154. And say not of those who are slain in the way(158) of Allah. "They are dead." Nay, they are living, though ye perceive (it) not.

158 The "patient perseverance and prayer" mentioned in the last verse is not mere passivity. It is active striving in the way of Truth, which is the way of Allah. Such striving is the spending of one's self in Allah's way, either through our property or through our own lives, or the lives of those nearest and dearest to us, or it may be the loss of all the fruits of a lifetime's labour not only in material goods but in some intellectual or moral gain, some position which seemed in our eyes to be eminently desirable in itself, but which we must cheerfully sacrifice if necessary for the Cause. With such sacrifice, our apparent loss may be our real gain; he that loses his life may really gain it; and the rewards or "fruits" that seem lost were mere impediments on our path to real inward progress. (R). *(Cf.* 3:169).

155. Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings(159) to those who patiently persevere,

159 The glad tidings are the blessings of Allah in 2:157 or (which is the same thing) the promise in 2:153 that Allah will be with them.

156. Who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To Allah We belong, and to Him is our return":-

157. They are those on whom (Descend) blessings from Allah, and Mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance.

158. Behold! Safa and Marwa are among the Symbols(160) of Allah. So if those who visit the House(161) in the Season or at other times, should compass them round, it is no sin in them. And if any one obeyeth his own impulse to good(162),- be sure that Allah is He Who recogniseth and knoweth.

160 The virtue of patient perseverance in faith leads to the mention of two symbolic monuments of that virtue. These are the two little hills of Safa and Marwah now absorbed in the city of Makkah , and close to the well of Zamzam. Here, according to tradition, the lady Hajar, mother of the infant Isma'il, prayed for water in the parched desert, and in her eager quest round these hills, she found her prayer answered and saw the Zamzam spring. Unfortunately the Pagan Arabs had placed a male and a female idol here, and their gross and superstitious rites caused offense to the early Muslims. They felt some hesitation in going round these places during the Pilgrimage. As a matter of fact they should have known that the Ka'bah (the House of Allah) had been itself defiled with idols, and was sanctified again by the purity of Muhammad's life and teaching. The lesson is that the most sacred things may be turned to the basest uses; that we are not therefore necessarily to ban a thing misused; that if our intentions and life are pure, Allah will recognise them even if the world cast stones at us because of some evil associations which they join with what we do, or with the people we associate with, or with the places which claim our reverence.

161 *The House* = the Sacred Mosque, the Ka'bah. The Season of regular Hajj culminates in the visit to Arafat on the ninth day of the month of Dhual Hijj ah, followed by the circumambulation of Ka'bah. A visit to the Sacred Mosque and the performance of the rites of pilgrimage at any other time is called an *'Umrah.* The symbolic rites are the same in either case, except that the *'Arafat* rites are omitted in the *'Umrah.* The Safa and Marwah are included among the Monuments, as pointing to one of the highest of Muslim virtues. (*Cf.* 5:2).

162 The impulse should be to Good; if once we are sure of this, we must obey it without hesitation, whatever people may say.

159. Those who conceal the clear (Signs) We have sent down, and the Guidance, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book,-on them shall be Allah.s curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse(163)-

163 *Those entitled to curse: i.e.,* angels and mankind (see 2:161 below): the cursed ones will deprive themselves of the protection of Allah and of the angels, and of the good wishes of mankind, because by contumaciously rejecting Faith, they not only sin against Allah but are false to their own manhood, which Allah created in the "best of moulds" (Q. 95:4). The terrible curses denounced in the Old Testament are set out in Deut. 28:15-68. There is one difference. Here it is for the deliberate rejection of Faith, a theological term for the denying of our higher nature. There it is for a breach of the least part of the ceremonial Law. (R).

160. Except those who repent and make amends and openly declare (the Truth): To them I turn; for I am Oft-returning, Most Merciful.

161. Those who reject Faith, and die rejecting,- on them is Allah.s curse, and the curse of angels, and of all mankind;

162. They will abide therein(164): Their penalty will not be lightened, nor will respite be their (lot).

164 *Therein* = in the curse. A curse is not a matter of words: it is a terrible spiritual state, opposite to the state of Grace. Can man curse? Not of course in the same sense in which we speak of the curse of Allah. A mere verbal curse is of no effect. Hence the English saying: "A causeless curse will not come." But if men are oppressed or unjustly treated, their cries can ascend to Allah in prayer, and then it becomes Allah's "wrath" or curse, the deprivation of Allah's Grace as regards the wrongdoer.

163. And your Allah is One Allah. There is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful(165).

165 Where the terrible consequences of Evil, *i.e.,* the rejection of Allah, are mentioned, there is always stress laid on Allah's attributes of Grace and Mercy. In this case Unity is also stressed, because we have just been told about the Qiblah symbol of unity and are about to pass the theme of unity in diversity, in Nature and in the social laws of human society.

164. Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah Sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they Trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth;- (Here) indeed are Signs for a people that are wise.

165. Yet there are men who take (for worship) others besides Allah, as equal (with Allah.: They love them as they should love Allah. But those of Faith are overflowing in their love for Allah. If only the unrighteous could see, behold, they would see the

penalty: that to Allah belongs all power, and Allah will strongly enforce the Punishment(167).

167 Everything around and within us points to unity of purpose and design — points to Allah. Yet there are foolish persons (unrighteous = those who deliberately use the choice given them to go wrong). They think something else is equal to Allah. Perhaps they even do lip service to Allah, but their heart is in their fetish -unlike the heart of the righteous, who are wholly devoted and absorbed in the love of Allah. If only the unrighteous could see the consequences, they would see the terrible Penalty, and that all Power is in Allah's hands, not in those of any one else. Who are these others who are used as fetishes by the misguided? They may be; (1) creatures of their own imagination, or of their faculties misused; the idea lying behind idols is akin to this, for no intelligent idol-worshipper owns to worshipping stocks and stones; or (2) good leaders whose names have been misused out of perversity to erect them to a position of equality with Allah; or (3) Powers of evil that deliberately mislead. When it comes to the inevitable consequences of blasphemy and the rejection of Allah, the eyes of all are opened and these false and artificial relations dissolve. The idea which was created into a fetish disowns its follower, *i.e.* is seen to have no reasonable basis in the life of the follower, and the follower is forced to renounce it as false. The good leaders whose names were misused would of course disown the misuse of their names, and the evil ones would take an unholy delight in exposing the facts. The Reality is now irresistible, but alas! at what cost? *(Cf.* 3:83).

166. Then would those who are followed clear themselves of those who follow (them) : They would see the penalty, and all relations between them would be cut off.

167. And those who followed would say: "If only We had one more chance, We would clear ourselves of them, as they have cleared themselves of us." Thus will Allah show them (The fruits of) their deeds as (nothing but) regrets. Nor will there be a way for them out of the Fire(168).

168 Cf. 3:156, 7:36 , 19:39 , 69:50, 25:23. [Eds.].

168. O ye people! Eat of what is on earth, Lawful and good(169); and do not follow the footsteps of the evil one, for he is to you an avowed enemy.

169 We now come to the regulations about food. First (2:168-71) we have an appeal to all people, Muslims, Pagans, as well as the People of the Book; then (2:172-73) to the Muslims specially; then (2:174-76) to the sort of men who then (as some do now) either believe in too much formalism or believe in no restrictions at all. Islam follows the Golden Mean. All well-regulated societies lay down reasonable limitations. These become incumbent on all loyal members of any given society, and show what is "lawful" in that society. But if the limitations are reasonable, as they should be, the "lawful" will also coincide more and more with what is "good."

Good: Tayyib= Pure, clean, wholesome, nourishing, pleasing to the taste.

The general principle then would be: what is lawful and what is good, should be followed, not what is evil, or shameful, or foisted on by false ascription to divine injunctions, or what rests merely on the usage of ancestors, even though the ancestors were ignorant or foolish. An example of a shameful custom would be that among the Pagan Arabs of talking congealed blood and eating it fried.

169. For he commands you what is evil and shameful, and that ye should say of Allah that of which ye have no knowledge.

170. When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah hath revealed:" They say: "Nay! we shall follow the ways of our fathers." What! even though their fathers Were void of wisdom and guidance?

171. The parable of those who reject Faith is as if one were to shout Like a goat-herd, to things that listen to nothing but calls and cries(170): Deaf, dumb, and blind(171), they are void of wisdom.

170 If you reject all faith, the highest wisdom and the most salutary regulations are lost on you. You are like "dumb driven cattle" who can merely hear calls, but cannot distinguish intelligently between shades of meaning or subtle differences of values.

171 *Cf.* 2:18 , where we are told that the rejectors of faith are "deaf, dumb and blind: they will not return to the path." Here the consequence of their not using their senses is that they have no wisdom. In each context there is just the appropriate deduction.

172. O ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be grateful to Allah, if it is Him ye worship(172).

172 Gratitude for Allah's gifts is one form of worship. *(Cf.* 11:123).

173. He hath only forbidden you dead meat(173), and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that on which any other name hath been invoked besides that of Allah(174). But if one is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits,- then is he guiltless. For Allah is Oft-forgiving Most Merciful.

173 Dead meat: *maytah:* carrion: animal that dies of itself: the original Arabic has a slighdy wider meaning given to it in *Fiqh* (Religious Law): anything that dies of itself and is not expressly killed for food with the *Takbir* duly pronounced on it. But there are exceptions, *e.g.,* fish and locust are lawful, though they have not been made specially *halal with* the *Takbir.* But even fish or locusts as carrion would be obviously ruled out

174 For prohibited foods, *cf.* also 5:4-5; 6:121, 138-146; etc. The teachers *of Fiqh* (Religious Law) work out the details with great elaboration. My purpose is to present general principles, not technical details. Carrion or dead meat and blood as articles of food would obviously cause disgust to any refined person. So would swine's flesh where the swine lives on offal. Where swine are fed artifically on clean food, the objections remain:

(1) that they are filthy animals in other respects, and the flesh of filthy animals taken as food affects the eater;

(2) that swine's flesh has more fat than muscle-building material; and (3) that it is more liable to disease than other kinds of meat; *e.g.,* trichinosis, characterized by hair-like worms in the muscular tissue. As to food dedicated to idols or false gods, it is obviously unseemly for the Children of Unity to partake of it.

174. Those who conceal Allah.s revelations in the Book, and purchase for them a miserable profit,- they swallow into themselves(175) naught but Fire; Allah will not address them on the Day of Resurrection. Nor purify them: Grievous will be their penalty.

175 "They eat nothing but fire into their bellies" is a literal translation that produces an effect of rude inelegance which is not in the Arabic words. Even in the matter of food and drinks, the mission of Islam is to avoid the extremes of lawlessness on the one hand and extreme formalism on the other. It has laid down a few simple and very reasonable rules. Their infraction causes loss of health or physical powers in any case. But if there is further a spirit of subjective rebellion or fraud - passing off in the name of religion something which is far from the purpose - the consequences become also moral and spiritual. Then it becomes a sin against Faith and Spirit. Continuing the physical simile, we actually swallow fire into ourselves. Imagine the torments which we should have if we swallowed fire into our physical body! They would be infinitely worse in our spiritual state, and they would go on to the Day of Resurrection, when we shall be deprived even of the words which the Judge speaks to a reasonable culprit, and we shall certainly not win His Grace and Mercy.

175. They are the ones who buy Error in place of Guidance and Torment in place of Forgiveness. Ah! what boldness (They show) for the Fire!

176. (Their doom is) because Allah sent down the Book in truth but those who seek causes of dispute in the Book are in a schism(176) Far (from the purpose).

176 From the mere physical regulation we are at once lifted up into the sphere of morals and faith. For the one acts and reacts on the other. If we are constantly carping at wholesome regulations, we shall do nothing but cause division and schisms among the people, and ordered society would tend to break up. *(Cf.* 41:52).

177. It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces Towards east or West; but it is righteousness(177)- to believe in Allah(178) and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of

your substance(179), out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer(180), and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient(181), in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah.fearing.

177 As if to emphasise again a warning against deadening formalism, we are given a beautiful description of the righteous and God-fearing man. He should obey salutary regulations, but he should fix his gaze on the love of Allah and the love of his fellow-men. We are given four heads: (1) our faith should be true and sincere; (2) we must be prepared to show it in deeds of charity to our fellow-men; (3) we must be good citizens, supporting social organisation; and (4) our own individual soul must be firm and unshaken in all circumstances. They are interconnected, and yet can be viewed separately.

178 Faith is not merely a matter of words. We must realise the presence and goodness of Allah. When we do so, the scales fall from our eyes: all the falsities and fleeting nature of the Present cease to enslave us, for we see the Last Day as if it were today. We also see Allah's working in His world and in us: His Angels. His Messengers and His Message are no longer remote from us, but come within our experience. (R).

179 Practical deeds of charity are of value when they proceed from love and from no other motive. In this respect, also, our duties take various forms, which are shown in reasonable gradation: our kith and kin: orphans (including any persons who are without support or help); people who are in real need but who never ask {it is our duty to find them out, and they come before those who ask); the stranger, who is entitled to laws of hospitality; the people who ask and are entitled to ask, *i.e.,* not merely lazy beggars, but those who seek our assistance in some form or another (it is our duty to respond to them); and the slaves (we must do all we can to give or buy their freedom). Slavery has many insidious forms, and all are included.

180 Charity and piety in individual cases do not complete our duties. In prayer and charity we must also look to our organised effort. Where there is a Muslim State , these are made through the State in facilities for public prayer, and public assistance, and for the maintenance of contracts and fair dealing in all matters.

181 Then come the Muslim virtues of firmness and patience. They are to "preserve the dignity of man, with soul erect" (Burns). Three sets of circumstances are specially mentioned for the exercise of this virtue: (1) bodily pain or suffering, (2) adversities or injuries of all kinds, deserved and undeserved, and (3) periods of public panic, such as war, violence, pestilence, etc.

178. O ye who believe! the law of equality(182) is prescribed to you in cases of murder(183): the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman. But if any remission is made by the brother(184) of the slain, then grant any reasonable demand(185), and compensate him with handsome gratitude, this is a concession and a Mercy from your Lord. After this whoever exceeds the limits shall be in grave penalty.

182 Note first that this verse and the *next* make it clear that Islam has much mitigated the horrors of the pre-Islamic custom of retaliation. In order to meet the strict claims of justice, equality is prescribed, with a strong recommendation for mercy and forgiveness. To translate q *isas,* therefore, by retaliation, is I think incorrect. The Latin legal term *Lex Talionis* may come near it, but even that is modified here. In any case it is best to avoid technical terms for things that are very different. "Retaliation" in English has a wider meaning, equivalent almost to returning evil for evil, and would more fitly apply to the blood-feuds of the Days of Ignorance. Islam says: if you mistake a life for a life, at least there should be some measure of equality in it; the killing of the slave of a tribe should not involve a blood feud where many free men would be killed; but the law of mercy, where it can be obtained by consent, with reasonable compensation, would be better.

Our law of equality only takes account of three conditions in civil society; free for free, slave for slave, woman for woman. Among free men or women, all are equal: you cannot ask that because a wealthy, or highborn, or influential man is killed, his life is equal to two or three lives among the poor or the lowly. Nor, in cases of murder, can you go into the value or abilities of a slave. A woman is mentioned separately because her position as a mother or an economic worker is different. She does not form a third class, but a division in the other two classes. One life having been lost, do not waste many lives in retaliation: at most, let the Law take one life under strictly perscribed conditions, and shut the door to private vengeance or tribal retaliation. But if the aggrieved party consents (and this condition of consent is laid down to prevent worse evils), forgiveness and brotherly love is better, and the door of Mercy is kept open. In western law, no felony can be compounded.

183 The jurists have carefully laid down that the law of *qisas* refers to murder only. *Qisas* is not applicable to manslaughter, due to a mistake or an accident. Then, there would be no capital punishment.

184 *The brother,* the term is perfectly general; all men are brothers in Islam. In this, and in all questions of inheritance, females have similar rights to males, and therefore the masculine gender imports both sexes. Here we are considering the rights of the heirs in the light of the larger brotherhood. In 2:178-179 we have the rights of the heirs to life (as it were): in 2:180-182 we proceed to the heirs to property.

185 The demand should be such as can be met by the party concerned, *i.e.,* within his means, and reasonable according to justice and good conscience. For example, a demand could not be made affecting the honour of a woman or a man. The whole penalty can be remitted if the aggrieved party agrees, out of brotherly love. In meeting that demand the culprit or his friends should equally be generous and recognise the good will of the other side. There should be no subterfuges, no bribes, no unseemly byplay: otherwise the whole intention of mercy and peace is lost.

179. In the Law of Equality there is (saving of) Life to you, o ye men of understanding; that ye may restrain yourselves.

180. It is prescribed, when death approaches any of you, if he leave any goods that he make a bequest to parents and next of kin(186), according to reasonable usage; this is due from the Allah.fearing.

186 There are rules of course for the disposal of intestate property. But it is a good thing that a dying man or woman should, of his own free will, think of his parents and his next of kin, not in a spirit of injustice to others, but in a spirit of love and reverence for those who have cherished him. He must, however, do it "according to reasonable usage": the limitations will be seen further on.

181. If anyone changes the bequest after hearing it, the guilt shall be on those who make the change. For Allah hears and knows (All things).

182. But if anyone fears partiality or wrongdoing(187) on the part of the testator, and makes peace between (The parties concerned), there is no wrong in him: For Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

187 A verbal will is allowed but it is expected that the testator will be just to his heirs and not depart from what is considered equitable. For this reason definite shares were laid down for heirs later (see 4:11 , etc.). These define or limit the testamentary power, but do not abrogate it. For example, amongst kin there are persons *(e.g.,* an orphan grandson in the presence of surviving sons) who would not inherit under the intestate scheme, and the testator might like to provide for them. Again, there may be outsiders for whom he may wish to provide, and jurists have held that he has powers of disposition up to one-third of his property. But he must not be partial to one heir at the expense of another, or attempt to defeat lawful creditors. If he tries to do this, those who are witnesses to his oral disposition may interfere in two ways. One way would be to persuade testator to change his bequest before he dies. The other way would be, after death, to get the interested parties together and ask them to agree to a more equitable arrangement. In such a case they are acting in good faith, and there is no fraud. They are doing nothing wrong. Islam approves of every lawful device for keeping brethren at peace, without litigation and quarrels. Except for this, the changing of the provisions of a Will is a crime, as it is under all Law.

183. O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed(188) to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint,-

188 *As it was prescribed:* this does not mean that the Muslim fast is like the other fasts previously observed, in the number of days, in the time or manner of the fast, or in other incidents; it only means that the principle of self-denial by fasting is not a new one.

184. (Fasting) for a fixed(189) number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey(190), the prescribed number (Should be made up) from days later. For those who can do it(191) (With hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent. But he that will give more, of his own free will,- it is better for him. And it is better for you that ye fast, if ye only knew.

189 This verse should be read with the following verses, 185-188, in order that the incidents of the physical fast may be fully understood with reference to its spiritual meaning.

The Muslim fast is not meant for self-torture. Although it is stricter than other fasts, it also provides alleviations for special circumstances. If it were merely a temporary abstention from food and drink, it would be salutary to many people, who habitually eat and drink to excess. The instincts for food, drink, and sex are strong in the animal nature, and temporary restraint from all these enables the attention to be directed to higher things. This is necessary through prayer, contemplation and acts of charity, not of the showy kind, but by seeking out those really in need. Certain standards are prescribed, but much higher standards are recommended.

190 For journeys, a minimum standard of three marches is prescribed by some Commentators; others make it more precise by naming a distance of 16 *farsakhs,* equivalent to 48 miles. A journey of 8 or 9 miles on foot is more tiring than a similar one by bullock cart. There are various degrees of fatigue in riding a given distance on horseback or by camel or in a comfortable train or by motor car or by steamer, aeroplane, or airship. In my opinion the standard must depend on the means of locomotion and on the relative resources of the traveller. It is better to determine it in each case according to circumstances. (R).

191 *Those who can do it with hardship;* such as aged people, or persons specially circumstanced. The Shafi'i school would include a woman expecting a child, or one who is nursing a baby, but on this point opinion is not unanimous, some holding that they ought to put in the fasts later, when they can.

185. Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur´an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment(192) (Between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him(193) in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful.

192 Judgement (between right and wrong): *Furqan* = the criterion or standard by which we judge between right and wrong. See 2:53 n. 68.

193 The regulations are again and again coupled with an insistence on two things: (a) the facilities and concessions given, and (b) the spiritual significance of die fast, without which it is like an empty shell without a kernel. If we realise this, we shall look upon Ramadan, not as a burden, but as a blessing, and shall be duly grateful for the lead given to us in this matter.

186. When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me: Let them also, with a will, Listen to My call, and believe in Me: That they may walk in the right way(194).

194 These verses 186 and 188 are not foreign to the subject of Ramadan, but emphasise its spiritual aspect. Here we are told of prayer and the nearness of Allah, and in 188 we are asked not to "eat up" other people's substance.

187. Permitted to you, on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives. They are your garments and ye are their garments(195). Allah knoweth what ye used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you; so now associate with them, and seek what Allah Hath ordained for you(196), and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread(197); then complete your fast Till the night appears(198); but do not associate with your wives while ye are in retreat(199) in the mosques. Those are(200) Limits (set by) Allah. Approach not nigh thereto. Thus doth Allah make clear His Signs to men: that they may learn self-restraint.

195 Men and women are each other's garments: i.e., they are for mutual support, mutual comfort, and mutual protection, fitting into each other as a garment fits the body. A garment also is both for show and concealment. The question of sex is always delicate to handle: here we are told that even in such matters a clear, open, and honest course is better than fraud or self-deception. The sex instinct is classed with eating and drinking, an animal thing to be restrained, but not to be ashamed of. The three things are prohibited during the fast by day, but permitted after the fast is broken at night till the next fast commences.

196 There is difference of opinion as to the exact meaning of this. I would connect this as a parallel clause with the clause "eat and drink", which follows, all three being governed by "until the white thread", etc. That is, all three things must stop when the fast begins again in the early morning. Or it may mean: What is permitted is well enough, but seek the higher things ordained for you.

197 Those in touch with Nature know the beautiful effects of early dawn. First appear thin white indefinable streaks of light in the east; then a dark zone supervenes; followed by a beautiful pinkish white zone clearly defined from the dark; after that the fast begins.

198 *Till the night appears:* From the actual practice of the Holy Prophet, this is rightly interpreted to mean: "Till sunset".

199 This verse refers to the known Islamic practice called *i'tikaf which* means retreating to mosques for devotion and worship. The Prophet (peace be on him) used to retreat to the mosque during the last ten days of Ramadan. [Eds.].

200 I construe these limits as applying to the whole of the regulations about fasts.

188. And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for the judges, with intent that ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of (other) people´s property(201).

201 Besides the three primal physical needs of man, which are apt to make him greedy, there is a fourth greed in society, the greed of wealth and property. The purpose of fasts is not completed until this fourth greed is also restrained. Ordinarily honest men are content if they refrain from robbery, theft, or embezzlement Two more subtle forms of the greed are mentioned here. One is where one uses one's own property for corrupting others -judges or those in authority- so as to obtain some material gain even under the cover and protection of the law. The words translated "other people's property" may also mean "public property". A still more subtle form is where we use our own property or property under our own control - "among yourselves" in the Text -for vain or frivolous uses. Under the Islamic standard this is also greed. Property carries with it its own responsibilities. If we fail to understand or fulfil them, we have not learnt the full lesson of self-denial by fasts.

189. They ask thee concerning the New Moons(202). Say: They are but signs to mark fixed periods of time in (the affairs of) men, and for Pilgrimage. It is no virtue if ye enter your houses from the back: It is virtue if ye fear Allah. Enter houses through the proper doors(203): And fear Allah. That ye may prosper.

202 There were many superstitions connected with the New Moon, as there are to the present day. We are told to disregard such superstitions. As a measure of time, where the lunar calendar is used, the New Moon is one great sign, for which people watch with eagerness. Muslim festivals, including the Pilgrimage are fixed by the appearance of the New Moon. The Arabs, among other superstitions, had one which made them enter their houses by the back door during or after the Pilgrimage. This is disapproved, for there is no virtue in any such artificial restrictions. All virtue proceeds from the love and fear of Allah.

203 This is a Muslim proverb now, and much might be written about its manifold meanings. A few may be noted here. (1) If you enter a society, respect its manners and customs. (2) If you want to achieve an object honourably, go about it openly and not "by a backdoor." (3) Do not beat about the bush. (4) If you wish success in an undertaking, provide all the necessary instruments for it *(Cf.* 5:23).

The subject of the New Moon provides a good transition between the Ramadan fast, which begins and ends with the New Moon, the Pilgrimage, whose ten days commence with the New Moon, and the War which Islam had to wage in self-defence against the Pagans, who wanted to exclude them from the Pilgrimage after they had driven them out of house and home.

190. Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you(204), but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors.

204 War is permissible in self-defence, and under well-defined limits. When undertaken, it must be pushed with vigour (but not relentlessly), but only to restore peace and freedom for the worship of Allah. In any case strict limits must not be transgressed: women, children, old and infirm men should not be molested, nor trees and crops cut down, nor peace withheld when the enemy comes to terms. (R).

191. And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have Turned you out; for

tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not(205) at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith(206).

205 This passage is illustrated by the events that happened at Hudaybiyyah in the sixth year of the Hijrah, though it is not clear that it was revealed on that occasion, The Muslims were by this time a strong and influential community. Many of them were exiles from Makkah, where the Pagans had established an intolerant autocracy, persecuting Muslims, preventing them from visiting their homes, and even keeping them out by force from performing the Pilgrimage during the universally recognised period of truce. This was intolerance, oppression, and autocracy to the last degree, and the mere readiness of the Muslims to enforce their rights *as* Arab citizens resulted without bloodshed in an agreement which the Muslims faithfully observed. The Pagans, however, had no scruples in breaking faith, and it is unnecessary here to go into subsequent events. *(Cf.* 5:2).

In general, it may be said that Islam is the religion of peace, good will, mutual understanding, and good faith. But it will not acquiesce in wrongdoing, and its men will hold their lives cheap in defence of honour, justice, and the religion which they hold sacred. Their ideal is that of heroic virtue combined with unselfish gentleness and tenderness, such as is exemplified in the life of the Prophet. They believe in courage, obedience, discipline, duty, and a constant striving by all the means in their power, physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual, for the establishment of truth and righteousness. They know that war is an evil, but they will not flinch from it if their honour demands it and a righteous *Imam* (such as Muhammad was *par excellence)* commands it, for then they know they are not serving carnal ends. In other cases, war has nothing to do with their faith, except that it will always be regulated by its humane precepts. (R).

206 *Suppress faith:* in the narrower as well as the larger sense. If they want forcibly to prevent you from exercising your sacred rites, they have declared war on your religion, and it would be cowardice to ignore the challenge or to fail in rooting out the tyranny.

192. But if they cease, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

193. And fight them on until there is no more Tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah(207). but if they cease(208), Let there be no hostility except to those who practise oppression.

207 *Justice and faith.* The Arabic word is *Din,* which is comprehensive. It implies the ideas of indebtedness, duty, obedience, judgment, justice, faith, religion, customary rites, etc. The clause means: "until there is *Din* for Allah."

208 If the opposite party ceases to persecute you, your hostility ends with them as a party, but it does not mean that you become friends to oppression. Your fight is against wrong; there should be no rancour against men.

194. The prohibited month for the prohibited month(209),- and so for all things prohibited,- there is the law of equality. If then any one transgresses the prohibition against you, Transgress ye likewise against him. But fear Allah, and know(210) that Allah is with those who restrain themselves.

209 *Haram* = prohibited, sacred. The month of Pilgrimage (Dhu al Hijjah) was a sacred month, in which warfare was prohibited by Arab custom. The month preceding (Dhu al Qa'dah) and the month following *(Muharram)* were included in the prohibition, and *Muharram* was specially called *al Haram.* Possibly *Muharram* is meant in the first line, and the other months and other prohibited things in "all things prohibited." In *Rajab,* also, war was prohibited, If the pagan enemies of Islam broke that custom and made war in the prohibited months, the Muslims were free also to break that custom but only to the same extent as the others broke it. Similarly the territory of Makkah was sacred, in which war was prohibited. If the enemies of Islam broke that custom, the Muslims were free to do so to that extent. Any convention is useless if one party does not respect it. There must be a law of equality. Or perhaps the word reciprocity may express it better. *(Cf,* 9:2).

210 At the same time the Muslims are commanded to exercise self-restraint as much as possible. Force is a dangerous weapon. It may have to be used for self-defence or self-preservation, but we must always remember that self-restraint is pleasing in the eyes of Allah. Even when we are fighting, it should be for a principle, not out of passion.

195. And spend of your substance in the cause of Allah, and make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction(211); but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good.

211 Every fight requires the wherewithals for the fight, the "sinews of war." If the war is just and in the cause of Allah, all who have wealth must spend it freely. That may be their contribution to the Cause, in addition to their personal effort, or if for any reason they are unable to fight. If they hug their wealth, perhaps their own hands are helping in their own self-destruction. Or if their wealth is being spent, not in the Cause of Allah, but in something which pleases their fancy, it may be that the advantage goes to the enemy, and they are by their action helping their own destruction. In all things, their standard should be, not selfishness, but the good of their brethren, for such good is pleasing to Allah.

196. And complete the Hajj or Umrah(212) in the service of Allah. But if ye are prevented (From completing it), send an offering for sacrifice, such as ye may find, and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice. And if any of you is ill(213), or has an ailment in his scalp, (Necessitating shaving), (He should) in compensation either fast, or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice; and when ye are in peaceful conditions (again)(214), if any one wishes to continue the ´Umrah on to the Hajj, He must make an offering, such as he can afford, but if he cannot afford it, He should fast three days during the Hajj and seven days on his return, Making ten days in all. This is for those whose household is not in (the precincts(215) of) the Sacred Mosque. And fear Allah, and know that Allah Is strict in punishment(216).

212 See 2:158, n. 161. The Hajj is the complete pilgrimage, of which the chief rites are performed during the first twelve or thirteen days of the month of Dhu al Hijjah. The *Umrah* is a less formal pilgrimage at any time of the year. In either case, the intending pilgrim commences by putting on a simple garment of unsewn cloth in two pieces when he is some distance yet from Makkah. The putting on of the pilgrim garb *(ihram)* is symbolical of his renouncing the vanities of the world. After this and until the end of the pilgrimage he must not wear other clothes, or ornaments, anoint his hair, use perfumes, hunt, or do other prohibited acts. The completion of the pilgrimage is symbolised by the shaving of the head for men and the cutting off of a few locks of the hair of the head for women, the putting off of the *ihram* and the resumption of the ordinary dress.

Here we are told: (1) that having once undertaken the pilgrimage, we must complete it; (2) that we must do it not for worldly ends, but as a symbol of our service and worship to Allah; (3) that if we are prevented, for any reason, from completing the rites, a symbolical completion can be made by sending an offering for sacrifice; sacrifice would have been offered if we had been present personally; here we would send the sacrifice vicariously, and when it is likely to reach the place of sacrifice, we could then shave our heads and resume our ordinary dress and avocations. (R).

213 If any one is taken ill after putting on the *ihram,* so that he has to put on other clothes, or if he has trouble or skin disease in his head or insects in his hair, and he has to shave his head before completion, he should fast (three days, say the Commentators), or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice.

214 When this was revealed, the city of Makkah was in the hands of the enemies of Islam, and the regulations about the fighting and the pilgrimage came together and were interconnected. But the revelation provides* as always, for the particular occasion, and also for normal conditions. Makkah soon passed out of the hands of the enemies of Islam. People sometimes came long distances to Makkah before the Pilgrimage season began. Having performed the ' *Umrah,* they stayed on for the formal *Hajj.* In case the pilgrim had spent his money, he is shown what he can do, rich or poor, and yet hold his head high among his fellows, as having performed all rites as prescribed.

215 There is disagreement among jurists whether residents of Makkah are allowed to make *tamattu* or not. However, the four schools of law are agreed that sacrificial offering is not obligatory for the residents of Makkah. [Eds.].

216 This closes the section about the duties of fighting and introduces the connected question of pilgrimage in a sort of transition. Fighting is connected with fear, and while it is meritorious to obey Allah, we are warned that we must not allow our selfish passions to carry us away, because it is in such times of stress that our spirit is tested. Verse 195 ended with a benediction for those who do good. This verse ends with a warning to those who take advantage of Allah's cause to transgress the limits, for the punishment is equally sure. The next verse shows us the pitfalls we must avoid in a large concourse of people.

197. For Hajj are the months well-known(217). If any one undertakes that duty therein, Let there be no obscenity, nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the Hajj. And whatever good ye do, (be sure) Allah knoweth it.

And take a provision(218) (With you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me, o ye that are wise.

217 *The months well known:* the months of *ShawwaI,* Dhual Qa'dah, and Dhual Hijjah (up to the 10th or the 13th) are set apart for the rites of *Hajj.* That is to say, the first rites may begin as early as the beginning of Shawwal, with a definite approach to Makkah, but the chief rites are concentrated on the first ten days of Dhu al Hijjah, and specially on the 8th, 9th and 10th of that month, when the concourse of pilgrims reaches its height. The chief rites may be briefly enumerated: (I) The wearing of the pilgrim garment *(ihram)* from certain points definitely fixed on all the roads to Makkah; after this the pilgrimage prohibitions come into operation and the pilgrim is dedicated to worship and prayer and the denial of vanities: (2) the going round the Ka'bah seven times *(tawaf),* typifying activity, with the kissing of the little Black Stone built into the wall, the symbol of concentration in the love of Allah; (3) after a short prayer at the Station of Abraham (Q. 2:125), the pilgrim goes to the hills Saf a and Marwah (Q. 2:158), the symbols of patience and perseverance; (4) the great Sermon *(Khutbah)* on the 9th of Dhual Hijjah. when the whole assembly listens to an exposition of the meaning of Hajj; (5) the visit on the eighth, of the whole body of pilgrims to the Valley of Min a (about six miles north of Makkah), where the pilgrims halt and stay the night, proceeding on the ninth to the plain and hill of 'Arafat, about five miles further north, which is also called the Mount of Mercy; (5) the tenth day, the ' Id Day, the day of Sacrifice, when the sacrifice is offered in the Valley of Mina, the head is shaved or the hair trimmed, the *tawafal Ifadah* and the symbolic ceremony of casting seven stones at the Evil One is performed on the first occasion; it is continued on subsequent days; both rites are connected with the story of Abraham: this is the ' I*dal Adha ;* note that the ceremony is symbolically connected with the rejection of evil in thought, word, and deed. A stay of two or three days after this is prescribed; these days are called *Tashriq* days. (R).

218 It is recommended that pilgrims should come with provisions, so that they should not be compelled to resort to begging. But, as usual, our thought is directed at once from the physical to the spiritual. If provisions are required for a journey on earth, how much more important to provide for the final journey into the future world? The best of such provisions is right conduct, which is the same as the fear of Allah.

198. It is no crime in you if ye seek of the bounty of your Lord (during pilgrimage)(219). Then when ye pour down from (Mount) Arafat, celebrate the praises of Allah at the Sacred Monument(220), and celebrate His praises as He has directed you, even though, before this, ye went astray(221).

219 Legitimate trade is allowed, in the interests both of the honest trader, who can thus meet his own expenses, and of the generality of pilgrims, who would otherwise be greatly inconvenienced for the necessaries of life. But the profit must be sought as from the "bounty of Allah." There should be no profiteering, or trade "tricks." Good honest trade is a form of service to the community, and therefore to Allah.

220 About midway between 'Arafat and Mina (see n. 217 to 2:197) is a place called Muzdalifah where the Holy Prophet offered up a long prayer. It has thus become a Sacred Monument and pilgrims are directed to follow that example on their return. A special reason for this is given in the note following.

221 Certain arrogant tribes living in Makkah used not to go to 'Arafat with the crowd but to stop short at Muzdalifah. They are rebuked for their arrogance and told that they must perform all the rites like the rest of the pilgrims. There is equality in Islam.

199. Then pass on at a quick pace from the place whence it is usual for the multitude(222) so to do, and ask for Allah.s forgiveness. For Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

222 See last note. Towards the end of the Pilgrimage the crowd is very great, and if any people loitered after 'Arafat, it would cause great confusion and inconvenience. The pace has therefore to be quick for every one, a very salutary regulation. Every member of the crowd must think of the comfort and convenience of the whole mass.

200. So when ye have accomplished your holy rites, celebrate the praises of Allah, as ye used to celebrate the praises of your fathers(223)- yea, with far more Heart and soul. There are men who say: "Our Lord! Give us (Thy bounties) in this world!" but they will have no portion in the Hereafter(224).

223 After the Pilgrimage, in Pagan times, the pilgrims used to gather in assemblies in which the praises of ancestors were sung. As the whole of the pilgrimage rites were spiritualised in Islam, so this aftermath of the Pilgrimage was also spiritualised. It was required from pilgrims to stay on two or three days after the Day of Sacrifice, but they must use them in prayer and praise to Allah. See 2:203 below. (R).

224 If you hasten to get all the good things of the world, and only think of them and pray for them, you would lose the higher things of the future. The proper Muslim attitude is neither to renounce this world nor to be so engrossed in it as to forget the spiritual future.

201. And there are men who say: "Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and defend us from the torment of the Fire!"

202. To these will be allotted(225) what they have earned; and Allah is quick in account.

225 Our spiritual account is mounting up, both on the debit and credit side. In worldly accounts, both our profits and our losses may be delayed. But in Allah's books there is no delay. Our actions go before us. (See 2:95. n. 100.)

203. Celebrate the praises of Allah during the Appointed Days(226). But if any one hastens to leave in two days, there is no blame on him, and if any one stays on, there is no blame on him, if his aim is to do right. Then fear Allah, and know that ye will surely be gathered unto Him.

226 *The Appointed Days:* the three days after the tenth, when the Pilgrims stay on in the Valley of Min a for prayer and praise. They are the days of *Tashriq* (see 2:200, n. 223). It is optional for pilgrims to leave on the second or third day.

204. There is the type of man(227) whose speech about this world´s life May dazzle thee, and he calls Allah to witness about what is in his heart; yet is he the most contentious of enemies.

227 The two contrasted types of men mentioned in 2:200 and 201 are here further particularised: the glib hypocrite who appears worldly-wise but plans harm, contrasted with the sincere believer who is prepared to suffer martyrdom for his faith. The Commentators give names of people who exemplified these types. The mischief-maker has a smooth tongue and indulges in plausible talk with many oaths. He appears to be worldly-wise, and though you may despise him for his worldliness, you may not realise his frauds. Behind your back he is an implacable enemy. He stirs up quarrels, and causes all sorts of mischief to you or your friends. He can never win Allah's love, and we are warned against his tricks.

205. When he turns his back, His aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But Allah loveth not mischief.

206. When it is said to him, "Fear Allah., He is led by arrogance to (more) crime. Enough for him is Hell;-An evil bed indeed (To lie on)(228)!

228 According to the English saying, "As you have made your bed, so you must lie in it."

207. And there is the type of man who gives his life to earn the pleasure of Allah. And Allah is full of kindness to (His) devotees(229).

229 This second type of man-firm, sincere, devoted, willing to give his life for the faith that is in him -was common in early Islam. Such men were its pillars. Through persecution, obloquy, torture, threat to their own lives or the lives of those dear to them, they stood by their leader and many of them gave their lives. That is what established Islam. We are asked in the next verse to follow this type and shun the other or evil type. If we do that, our Cause is safe.

208. O ye who believe! Enter into Islam whole-heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the evil one; for he is to you an avowed enemy.

209. If ye backslide after the clear (Signs) have come to you, then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise(230).

230 If you backslide after the conviction has been brought home to you, you may cause some inconvenience to the Cause, or to those who counted upon you, but

do not be so arrogant as to suppose that you will defeat Allah's Power and Wisdom. The loss will be your own,

210. Will they wait until Allah comes to them in canopies of clouds, with angels (in His train) and the question is (thus) settled? but to Allah do all questions go back (for decision)(231).

231 If faith is wanting, all sorts of excuses are made to resist the appeal of Allah. They might and do say: "Oh yes! we shall believe if Allah appears to us with His angels in His glory!" In other words they want to settle the question their way, and not in Allah's way. That will not do. The decision in all questions belongs to Allah. If we are true to Him, we wait for His times and seasons, and do not expect Him to wait on ours. (*Cf.* 6:7-8 and 11:123).

211. Ask the Children of Israel(232) how many clear (Signs) We have sent them. But if any one, after Allah.s favour has come to him, substitutes (something else), Allah is strict in punishment(233).

232 The Israelites under Moses were shown Allah's glory and many clear Signs and yet they went after their own ways, and preferred their own whims and fancies. So do people in all ages. But let diem not deceive themselves. Allah's justice is sure, and when it comes, it will be strict and unmistakable to those who reject His grace.

233 *Cf.* 2:196 (end) where the question was of those who do not fear Allah. Here the question is of those who reject Allah's Signs.

212. The life of this world is alluring to those who reject faith, and they scoff at those who believe. But the righteous will be above them on the Day of Resurrection; for Allah bestows His abundance without measure on whom He will(234).

234 Allah's gifts in this world seem unequal, and sometimes those who get them seem to deserve them least. Allah's bounty is unlimited to the just as well as the unjust. In His wisdom He may give to whomsoever He pleases. The account is not taken now, but will be taken in the end, when the balance will be redressed.

213. Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed; but the People of the Book, after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His Grace Guided the believers to the Truth, concerning that wherein they differed. For Allah guided whom He will to a path that is straight.

214. Or do ye think that ye shall enter the Garden (of bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? they encountered suffering and adversity, and were so shaken in spirit that even the Messenger and those of faith who were with him cried: "When (will come) the help of Allah." Ah! Verily, the help of Allah is (always) near!

215. They ask thee what they should spend (In charity). Say: Whatever ye spend that is good(235), is for parents and kindred and orphans and those in want and for wayfarers. And whatever ye do that is good, -(Allah) knoweth it well.

235 Three questions arise in charity: (1) What shall we give? (2) to whom shall we give? and (3) how shall we give? The answer is here. Give anything that is good, useful, helpful, valuable. It may be property or money; it may be a helping hand; it may be advice; it may be a kind word; "whatever ye do that is good" is charity. On the other hand, if you throw away what is useless, there is no charity in it. Or if you give something with a harmful intent, *e.g.,* a sword to a madman, or a drug or sweets or even money to someone whom you want to entrap or corrupt, it is no charity but a gift of damnation. To whom should you give? It may be tempting to earn the world's praise by a gift that will be talked about, but are you meeting the needs of those who have the first claim on you? If you are not, you are like a person who defrauds creditors: it is no charity. Every gift is judged by its unselfish character: the degree of need or claim is a factor which you should consider; if you disregard it, there is something selfish behind it. How should it be given? As in the sight of Allah; this shuts out all pretence, show, and insincerity. (*Cf.* 2:263-267).

216. Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it(236). But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth, and ye know not.

236 To fight in the cause of Truth is one of the highest forms of charity. What can you offer that is more precious than your own life? But here again the limitations come in. If you are a mere brawler, or a selfish aggressive person, or a vainglorious bully, you deserve the highest censure. Allah knows the value of things better than you do. (*Cf.* 2:243-244). (R).

217. They ask thee concerning fighting in the Prohibited Month(237). Say: "Fighting therein is a grave (offence); but graver is it in the sight of Allah to prevent access to the path of Allah, to deny Him, to prevent access to the Sacred Mosque, and drive out its members(238)." Tumult and oppression(239) are worse than slaughter. Nor will they cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith if they can. And if any of you Turn back from their faith and die in unbelief, their works will bear no fruit in this life and in the Hereafter; they will be companions of the Fire and will abide therein.

237 *Prohibited Month;* See 2:194, n. 209.

238 The intolerance and persecution of the Pagan clique at Makkah caused untold hardships to the Messenger of Islam and his early disciples. They bore all with meekness and long-suffering patience until the Holy One permitted them to take up arms in self-defence. Then they were twitted with breach of the custom about Prohibited Months, though they were driven to fight during that period against their own feeling in self defence. But their enemies not only forced them to engage in actual warfare, but interfered with their conscience, persecuted them and their families, openly insulted and denied Allah, kept out the Muslims from the Sacred Mosque, and exiled them. Such violence and intolerance are deservedly called worse than slaughter.

239 *Cf.* 2:191, 193, where a similar phrase occurs, *Fitnah* = trial, temptation, as in 2:102; or tumult, sedition, oppression, as here; M.MA., H.G.S., and M.P. translate "persecution" in this passage, which is also legitimate, seeing that persecution is the suppression of some opinion by violence, force, or threats.

218. Those who believed and those who suffered exile and fought (and strove and struggled) in the path of Allah,- they have the hope of the Mercy of Allah. And Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

219. They ask thee concerning wine(240) and gambling(241). Say: "In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit." They ask thee how much they are to spend; Say: "What is beyond(242) your needs." Thus doth Allah Make clear to you His Signs: In order that ye may consider-

240 Wine: *Khamr.* literally understood to mean the fermented juice of the grape; applied by analogy to all fermented liquor, and by further analogy to any intoxicating liquor or drug. There may possibly be some benefit in it, but the harm is greater than the benefit, especially if we look at it from a social as well as an individual point of view. (*Cf.* 5:90-91).

241 *Gambling: maysir.* literally, a means of getting something too easily, getting a profit without working for it; hence gambling. That is the principle on which gambling is prohibited. The form most familiar to the Arabs was gambling by casting lots by means of arrows, on the principle of a lottery: the arrows were marked and served the same purpose as a modern lottery ticket. Something, *e.g.,* the carcass of a slaughtered animal, was divided into unequal parts. The marked arrows were drawn from a bag. Some were blank and those who drew them got nothing. Others indicated prizes, which were big or small. Whether you got a big share or a small share, or nothing, depended on pure luck, unless there was fraud also on the part of some persons concerned. The principle on which the objection is based is: that, even if there is no fraud, you gain what you have not earned, or lose on a mere chance. Dice and wagering are rightly held to be within the definition of gambling. (R).

242 Hoarding is no use either to ourselves, or to any one else. We should use the wealth we need; any superfluities we must spend in good works or in charity.

220. (Their bearings) on this life and the Hereafter(243). They ask thee concerning orphans(244). Say: "The best thing to do is what is for their good; if ye mix their affairs with yours, they are your brethren; but Allah knows the man who means mischief from the man who means good. And if Allah had wished, He could have put you into difficulties: He is indeed Exalted in Power, Wise(245)."

243 Gambling and intemperance are social as well as individual sins. They may ruin us in our ordinary everyday worldly life, as well as our spiritual future. In case it is suggested that there is no harm in a little indulgence, we are asked to think over all its aspects, social and individual - worldly and spiritual.

244 For Orphans the best rule is to keep their property, household, and accounts separate, lest there should be any temptation to get a personal advantage to their guardian by mixing them with the guardian's property, household or accounts-also to keep clear of any ideas of marriage, where this fiduciary relation exists. Q. 6:152 may possibly suggest complete separation. But it may be an economy and an advantage to the orphan to have his property and accounts administered with the guardian's property and accounts and to have him live in the guardian's household, or to marry into the guardian's family, especially where the orphan's property is small and he or she has no other friend. The test is: what is best in the orphan's interests? If the guardian does fall into temptation, even if human law does not detect him, he is told he is sinning in Allah's

245 The idea in Islam is not to make Allah's Law a burdensome fetter, but to ease a man's path in all kinds of difficult situations by putting him on his honour and trusting him. The strictest probity is demanded of him, but if he falls short of it, he is told that he cannot escape Allah's punishment even though he may evade human punishment.

221. Do not marry unbelieving(245-A) women (idolaters), until they believe: A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you. Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe: A man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever, even though he allures you. Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the Fire. But Allah beckons by His Grace to the Garden (of bliss) and forgiveness, and makes His Signs clear to mankind: That they may celebrate His praise.

245-A Literally "pagan",

222. They ask thee concerning women´s courses. Say: They are a hurt and a pollution(247): So keep away from women in their courses, and do not approach them until they are clean. But when they have purified themselves, ye may approach them in any manner, time, or place(248) ordained for you by Allah. For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.

247 *Adhan:* hurt, pollution. Both aspects must be remembered. Physical cleanliness and purity make for health, bodily and spiritual. But the matter should be looked at from the woman's point of view as well as the man's. To her there is danger of hurt, and she should have every consideration. In the animal world, instinct is a guide which is obeyed. Man should in this respect be better: he is often worse.

248 *Haythu:* A comprehensive word referring to manner, time, or place. The most delicate matters are here referred to in the most discreet and yet helpful terms. In sex morality, manner, time, and place are all important: and the highest standards are set by social laws, by our own refined instinct of mutual consideration, and above all, by the light shed by the highest Teachers from the wisdom which they receive from our Maker, Who loves purity and cleanliness in all things.

223. Your wives are as a tilth(249) unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will; but do some good act for your souls beforehand; and fear Allah. And know that ye are to meet Him (in the Hereafter), and give (these) good tidings(250) to those who believe.

249 Sex is not a thing to be ashamed of, or to be treated lightly, or to be indulged to excess. It is as solemn a fact as any in life. It is compared to a husbandman's tilth; it is a serious affair to him; he sows the seed in order to reap the harvest. But he chooses his own time and mode of cultivation. He does not sow out of season nor cultivate in a manner which will injure or exhaust the soil. He is wise and considerate and does not run riot. Coming from the simile to human beings, every kind of mutual consideration is required, but above all, we must remember that even in these matters there is a spiritual aspect. We must never forget our souls, and that we are responsible to Allah. It was carnal-minded men who invented the doctrine of original sin: "Behold," says the Psalmist, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 51:5). This is entirely repudiated by Islam, in which the office of father and mother is held in the highest veneration. Every child of pure love is born pure. Celibacy is not necessarily a virtue, and may be a vice.

250 Our highest spiritual ambition should be the hope of meeting Allah, To uphold such a hope is to give glad tidings to people of faith. It would only be unrepentant sinners who would fear the meeting. Note how the most sensuous matters are discussed frankly, and immediately taken up into the loftiest regions of spiritual unliftment.

224. And make not Allah.s (name) an excuse in your oaths against doing good, or acting rightly, or making peace between persons; for Allah is One Who heareth and knoweth(251) all things.

251 The Arabs had many special kinds of oaths, for each of which they had a special name in their language. Some of them related to sex matters, and caused misunderstanding, alienation, division, or separation between husband and wife. This and the following three verses refer to them all. In 2:224 we are first of all told in perfectly general terms that we are not to make an oath in the name of Allah as excuse for not doing the right thing when it is pointed out to us, or for refraining from doing something which will bring people together. If we were swayed by anger or passion or mere caprice, Allah knows our inmost hearts, and right conduct and not obstinacy or quibbling is what He demands from us. *(Cf.* 66:2).

225. Allah will not call you to account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts(252); and He is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing.

252 It has been held that thoughtless oaths, if there is no intention behind them, can be expiated by an act of charity. (*Cf.* 5:89).

226. For those who take an oath for abstention from their wives, a waiting for four months is ordained; if then they return, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

227. But if their intention is firm for divorce, Allah heareth and knoweth all things(253).

253 Verses 225-227 should be read together with verse 224. The latter, though it is perfectly general, leads up to the other three.

The Pagan Arabs had a custom very unfair to women in wedlock, and this was suppressed by Islam. Sometimes, in a fit of anger or caprice, a husband would take an oath by Allah not to approach his wife. This deprived her of conjugal rights, but at the same time kept her tied to him indefinitely, so that she could not marry again. If the husband was remonstrated with, he would say that his oath by Allah bound him. Islam in the first place disapproved of thoughtless oaths, but insisted on proper solemn intentional oaths being scrupulously observed. In a serious matter like that affecting a wife, if the oath was put forward as an excuse, the man is told that it is no excuse at all. Allah looks to intention, not mere thoughtless words. The parties are allowed a period of four months to make up their minds and see if an adjustment is possible. Reconciliation is recommended, but if they are really determined against reconciliation, it is unfair to keep them tied indefinitely.

228. Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods. Nor is it lawful for them to hide what Allah Hath created in their wombs, if they have faith in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have the better right to take them back in that period, if they wish for reconciliation(254). And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them(255). And Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

254 Islam tries to maintain the married state as far as possible, especially where children are concerned, but it is against the restriction of the liberty of men and women in such vitally important matters as love and family life. It will check hasty action as far as possible, and leave the door to reconciliation open at many stages. Even after divorce a suggestion of reconciliation is made, subject to certain precautions (mentioned in the following verses) against thoughtless action. A

period of waiting *('iddah)* for three monthly courses is prescribed, in order to see if the marriage conditionally dissolved is likely to result in issue. But this is not necessary where the divorced woman is a virgin: 33:49. It is definitely declared that men and women shall have similar rights against each other.

255 The difference in economic position between the sexes makes the man's rights and liabilities a little greater than the woman's. Q. 4:34 refers to the duty of the man to maintain the woman, and to a certain difference in nature between the sexes. Subject to this, the sexes are on terms of equality in law, and in certain matters the weaker sex is entitled to special protection.

229. A divorce is only(256) permissible twice: after that, the parties should either hold Together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness.(257) It is not lawful for you, (Men), to take back any of your gifts (from your wives), except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah.(258) If ye (judges) do indeed fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah, there is no blame on either of them if she give something for her freedom. These are the limits ordained by Allah. so do not transgress them if any do transgress the limits ordained by Allah, such persons wrong (Themselves as well as others).(259)

256 Where divorce for mutual incompatibility is allowed, there is danger that the parties might act hastily, then repent, and again wish to separate. To prevent such capricious action repeatedly, a limit is prescribed. Two divorces (with a reconciliation between) are allowed. After that the parties must definitely make up their minds, either to dissolve the union permanently, or to live honourable lives together in mutual love and forebearance-to "hold together on equitable terms," neither party worrying the other nor grumbling nor evading the duties and responsibilities of marriage f &

257 If a separation is inevitable, the parties should not throw mud at each other, but recognise what is right and honourable on a consideration of all the circumstances. In any case a man is not allowed to ask back for any gifts or property he may have given to the wife. This is for the protection of the economically weaker sex. Lest that protective provision itself work against the woman's freedom, an exception is made in the next clause.

258 All other prohibitions and limits prescribed here are in the interests of good and honourable lives for both sides, and in the interests of a clean and honourable social life, without public or private scandals. If there is any fear that in safeguarding her economic rights, her very freedom of person may suffer, the husband refusing the dissolution of marriage, and perhaps treating her with cruelty, then, in such exceptional cases, it is permissible to give some material consideration to the husband, but the need and equity of this should be submitted to the judgement of impartial judges, *i.e.,* properly constituted courts. A divorce of this kind is called *khul'.*

259 *Wrong (themselves as well as others): Zalimun:* for the root meaning of *zulm* see n. 51 to 2:35.

230. So if a husband divorces his wife (irrevocably)(260), he cannot, after that, remarry her until after she has married another husband and he has divorced her. In that case there is no blame on either of them if they reunite, provided they feel that they can keep the limits ordained by Allah. Such are the limits ordained by Allah, which He makes plain to those who understand.

260 This is in continuation of the first sentence of 2:229. Two divorces followed by reunion are permissible; the third time the divorce becomes irrevocable, until the woman marries some other man and he divorces her. This is to set an almost impossible condition. The lesson is: if a man loves a woman he should not allow a sudden gust of temper or anger to induce him to take hasty action. What happens after two divorces, if the man takes her back? See n. 261 to 2:231.

231. When ye divorce(261) women, and they are about to fulfil the term of their (´Iddat), either retain them back or let them go; but do not retain them to injure them, (or) to take undue advantage;(262) if any one does that; He wrongs his own soul. Do not treat Allah's Signs as a jest,(263) but solemnly rehearse(264) Allah.s favours on you, and the fact that He sent down to you the Book and Wisdom, for your instruction. And fear Allah, and know that Allah is well-acquainted with all things.

261 If the man takes back his wife after two divorces, he must do so only on equitable terms, *i.e.,* he must not put pressure on the woman to prejudice her rights in any way, and they must live clean and honourable lives, respecting each other's personalities. There are here two conditional clauses: (1) 'when ye divorce women,' and (2) 'when they fulfil their *'Iddah:'* followed by two consequential clauses, (3) 'take them back on equitable terms,' or (4) 'set them free with kindness.' The first is connected with the third and the second with the fourth. Therefore if the husband wishes to resume marital relations, he need not wait for *'Iddah.* But if he does not so wish, she is free to marry someone else after *'Iddah.* For the meaning of *'Iddah* see n. 254 above.

262 Let no one think that the liberty given to him can be used for his own selfish ends. If he uses the law for the injury of the weaker party, his own moral and spiritual nature suffers.

263 These difficult questions of sex relations are often treated as a joke. But they profoundly affect our individual lives, the lives of our children, and the purity and well-being of the society in which we live. This aspect of the question is reiterated again and again.

264 *Rehearse: dhikr.* Cf. 2:151 and n. 156. We are asked to remember in our own minds, and to proclaim and praise, and be proud of Allah's favours on us. His favours are immeasurable: not the least are His Revelations, and the wisdom which He has given to us to enable us to judge and act up to His guidance.

232. When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their (´Iddat), do not prevent them(265) from marrying persons of their choice, if they mutually agree on equitable terms. This instruction is for all amongst you, who believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is (the course Making for) most virtue and purity amongst you and Allah knows, and ye know not.

265 The termination of a marriage bond is a most serious matter for family and social life. And every lawful device is approved which can equitably bring back those who have lived together, provided only there is mutual love and they can live on honourable terms with each other. If these conditions are fulfilled, it is not right for outsiders to prevent or hinder reunion. They may be swayed by property or other considerations. This verse was occasioned by an actual case that was referred to the Prophet in his lifetime.

233. The mothers shall give suck(266) to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing(266-A) on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be Treated unfairly on account of her child. Nor father on account of his child, an heir shall be chargeable in the same way, If they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them. If ye decide on a foster-mother for your offspring, there is no blame on you, provided ye pay (the mother) what ye offered, on equitable terms. But fear Allah and know that Allah sees well what ye do.

266 As this comes in the midst of regulations on divorce, it applies primarily to cases of divorce, where some definite rule is necessary, as the father and mother would not, on account of the divorce, probably be on good terms, and the interests of the children must be safeguarded. As, however, the wording is perfectly general, it has been held that the principle applies equally to the father and mother in wedlock: each must fulfil his or her part in the fostering of the child. On the other hand, it is provided that the child shall not be used as an excuse for driving a hard bargain on either side. By mutual consent they can agree to some course that is reasonable and equitable, both as regards the period before weaning (the maximum being two years) and the engagement of a wet-nurse, or (by analogy) for artificial feeding. But the mother's privileges must not be curtailed simply because by mutual consent she does not nurse the baby. In a matter of this kind the ultimate appeal must be to godliness, for all legal remedies are imperfect and may be misused. *(Cf.* 31:14).

266-A *I.e.,* in the case of divorce. [Eds.].

234. If any of you die and leave widows behind, they shall wait concerning themselves four months and ten days:(267) When they have fulfilled their term, there is no blame on you if they dispose of themselves in a

just and reasonable manner. And Allah is well acquainted with what ye do.

267 The *'Iddah* of widowhood (four months and ten days) is longer than the *'Iddah* of divorce (three monthly courses. 2:418). In the latter the only consideration is to ascertain if there is any unborn issue of the marriage dissolved. This is clear from 33:49, where it is laid down that there is no *'Iddah* for virgin divorcees. In the former there is in addition the consideration of mourning and respect for the deceased husband. In either case, if it is proved that there is unborn issue, there is of course no question of remarriage for the woman until it is born and for a reasonable time afterwards. Meanwhile her maintenance on a reasonable scale is chargeable to the late husband or his estate.

235. There is no blame on you if ye make an offer of betrothal or hold it in your hearts.(268) Allah knows that ye cherish them in your hearts: But do not make a secret contract with them except that you speak to them in terms honourable, nor resolve on the tie of marriage till the term prescribed is fulfilled. And know that Allah Knoweth what is in your hearts, and take heed of Him; and know that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

268 A definite contract of remarriage for the woman during her period of *'Iddah* of widowhood is forbidden as obviously unseemly, as also any secrecy in such matters. It would bind the woman at a time when she is not fitted to exercise her fullest judgement. But circumstances may arise when an *offer* (open for future consideration but not immediately decided) may be to her interests, and this is permissible. (R).

236. There is no blame on you if ye divorce women before consummation or the fixation of their dower; but bestow on them (A suitable gift), the wealthy according to his means, and the poor according to his means - A gift of a reasonable amount is due from those who wish to do the right thing.

237. And if ye divorce them before consummation, but after the fixation of a dower for them, then the half of the dower (Is due to them), unless they remit it or (the man´s half) is remitted(269) by him in whose hands is the marriage tie;(270) and the remission (of the man´s half) is the nearest to righteousness. And do not forget Liberality between yourselves. For Allah sees well all that ye do.

269 The law declares that in such a case half the dower fixed shall be paid by the man to the woman. But it is open to the woman to remit the half due to her or to the man to remit the half which he is entitled to deduct, and thus pay the whole.

270 *Him in whose hands is the marriage tie* : According to Hanaf i doctrine this is the husband himself, who can ordinarily by his act dissolve the marriage. It therefore behoves him to be all the more liberal to the woman and pay her the full dower even if the marriage was not consummated.

238. Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the Middle Prayer;(271) and stand before Allah in a devout (frame of mind).

271 *The Middle Prayer. Al Salat al wusta :* may be translated "the best or most excellent prayer." Authorities differ as to the exact meaning of this phrase. The weight of authorities seems to be in favour of interpreting this as the 'Asr prayer (in the middle of the afternoon). This is apt to be most neglected, and yet this is the most necessary, to remind us of Allah in the midst of our worldly affairs. (R).

239. If ye fear (an enemy)(272), pray on foot, or riding, (as may be most convenient), but when ye are in security, celebrate Allah's praises in the manner He has taught you, which ye knew not (before).

272 Verses 238-239 are parenthetical, introducing the subject of prayer in danger. This is more fully dealt with in 4:101-03.

240. Those of you who die and leave widows should bequeath for their widows a year´s maintenance and residence;(273) but if they leave (The residence), there is no blame on you for what they do with themselves, provided it is reasonable. And Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

273 Opinions differ whether the provision (of a year's maintenance, with residence), for a widow, is abrogated by the share which the widow gets (one-eighth or one-fourth) as an heir (4:12). I do not think it is. The bequest (where made) takes effect as a charge on the property, but the widow can leave the house before the year is out, and presumably maintenance then ceases.

241. For divorced women (a one time provision should be paid) on a reasonable (scale). This is a duty on the righteous.

242. Thus doth Allah Make clear His Signs to you: In order that ye may understand.

243. Didst thou not Turn by vision to those who abandoned their homes, though they were thousands (In number), for fear of death? Allah said to them: "Die": Then He restored them to life.(274) For Allah is full of bounty to mankind, but Most of them are ungrateful.

274 We now return to the subject of Jihad, which we left at 2:214-216. We are to be under no illusion about it. If we are not prepared to fight for our faith, with our lives and all our resources, both our lives and our resources will be wiped out by our enemies. As to life, Allah gave it, and a coward is not likely to save it. It has happened again and again in history that men who tamely submitted to be driven from their homes although they were more numerous than their enemies, had the sentence of death pronounced on them for their cowardice, and they deserved it. But Allah gives further and further chances in His mercy. This is a lesson to every generation. The Commentators differ as to the exact episode referred to, but the wording is perfectly general, and so is the lesson to be learnt from it.

244. Then fight in the cause of Allah, and know that Allah Heareth and knoweth all things.(275)

275 For Allah's cause we must fight, but never to satisfy our own selfish passions or greed, for the warning is repeated: "Allah heareth and knoweth all things"; all deeds, words, and motives are perfectly open before Him, however we might conceal them from men or even from ourselves. See 2:216. n. 236.

245. Who is he that will loan to Allah a beautiful loan,(276) which Allah will double unto his credit and multiply many times? It is Allah that giveth (you) Want or plenty, and to Him shall be your return.

276 Spending in the cause of Allah is called metaphorically "a beautiful loan". It is excellent in many ways: (1) it shows a beautiful spirit of self-denial; (2) in other loans there may be a doubt as to the safety of your capital or any return thereon; here you give to the Lord of All, in Whose hands are the keys of want or plenty; giving, you may have manifold blessings, and withholding, you may even lose what you have. If we remember that our goal is Allah, can we turn away from His cause? *(Cf.* 64:17 and 3:180-181).

246. Hast thou not Turned thy vision to the Chiefs of the Children of Israel after (the time of) Moses(277)? they said to a prophet (278)(That was) among them: "Appoint for us a king, that we May fight in the cause of Allah." He said: "Is it not possible(279), if ye were commanded to fight, that that ye will not fight?" They said: "How could we refuse to fight in the cause of Allah, seeing that we were turned out of our homes and our families?" but when they were commanded to fight, they turned back, except a small band among them. But Allah Has full knowledge of those who do wrong.

277 The next generation after Moses and Aaron was ruled by Joshua, who crossed the Jordan and settled the tribes in Palestine . His rule lasted for 25 years, after which there was a period of 320 years when the Israelites had a chequered history. They were not united among themselves, and suffered many reverses at the hands of the Midianites, Amalekites, and other tribes of Palestine . They frequently lapsed into idolatry and deserted the worship of the true God. From time to time a leader appeared among them who assumed dictatorial powers. Acting under a sort of theocratic commission from Allah, he pointed out their backslidings, reunited them under His banner, and restored, from time to time and place to place, the power of Israel . These dictators are called Judges in the English translation of the Old Testament. The last of their line was Samuel, who marks

the transition towards the line of Kings on the one hand and of the later Prophets on the other. He may be dated approximately about the 11th century B.C.

278 This was Samuel. In his time Israel had suffered from much corruption within and many reverses without. The Philistines had made a great attack and defeated Israel with great slaughter. The Israelites, instead of relying on Faith and their own valour and cohesion, brought out their most sacred possession, the Ark of the Covenant, to help them in the fight. But the enemy captured it, carried it away, and retained it for seven months. The Israelites forgot that wickedness cannot screen itself behind a sacred relic. Nor can a sacred relic help the enemies of faith. The enemy found that the Ark brought nothing but misfortune for themselves, and were glad to abandon it. It apparently remained twenty years in the village *(qaryah)* of Ya'arim (Kirjath jearim): I. Samuel, 7:2. Meanwhile the people pressed Samuel to appoint them a king. They thought that a king would cure all their ills, whereas what was wanting was a spirit of union and discipline and a readiness on their part to fight in the cause of Allah.

279 Samuel knew as a Prophet that the people were fickle and only wanted to cover their own want of union and true spirit by asking for a king. They replied with spirit in words, but when it came to action, they failed. They hid themselves in caves and rocks, or ran away, and even those who remained "followed him trembling": I. Samuel, 13:6-7.

247. Their Prophet said to them: "(Allah) hath appointed Talut(280) as king over you." They said: "How can he exercise authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority, and he is not even gifted, with wealth in abundance?" He said: "(Allah) hath Chosen him above you, and hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess: Allah Granteth His authority to whom He pleaseth. Allah careth for all, and He knoweth all things."

280 Talut the Arabic name for Saul, who was tall and handsome, but belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel . His worldly belongings were slender, and it was when he went out to search for some asses which had been lost from his father's house that he met Samuel and was anointed king by him. The people's fickleness appeared immediately after he was named. They raised all sorts of petty objections to him. The chief consideration in their minds was selfishness: each one wanted to be leader and king himself, instead of desiring sincerely the good of the people as a whole, as a leader should do.

248. And (further) their Prophet said to them: "A Sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark of the covenant(281), with (an assurance) therein of security(282) from your Lord, and the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron, carried by angels(283). In this is a symbol for you if ye indeed have faith."

281 *Ark of the Covenant: Tabut:* a chest of acacia wood covered and lined with pure gold, about 5 ft. x 3ft *x* 3 ft. See Exod. 25:10-22. It was to contain the "testimony of Allah", or the Ten Commandments engraved on stone, with relics of Moses and Aaron. Its Gold lid was to be the "Mercy Seat." This was a sacred possession to Israel . It was lost to the enemy in the early part of Samuel's ministry: see n. 278 to 2:246. When it came back, it remained in a village for twenty years, and was apparently taken to the capital when kingship was instituted. It thus became a symbol of unity and authority. (R).

282 *Security: sakinah* = safety, tranquillity, peace. Later Jewish writings use the same word for a symbol of Allah's Glory in the Tabernacle or tent in which the Ark was kept, or in the Temple when it was built by Solomon. *(Cf.* 9:26).

283 *Carried by angels* : these words refer to the Tabut or Ark. (R).

249. When Talut set forth with the armies, he said(284): "(Allah) will test you at the stream: if any drinks of its water, He goes not with my army: Only those who taste not of it go with me: A mere sip out of the hand is excused." but they all drank of it, except a few. When they crossed the river,- He and the faithful ones with him,they said: "This day(285) We cannot cope with Goliath and his forces." but those who were convinced that they must meet Allah, said: "How oft, by Allah.s will, Hath a small force vanquished a big one? Allah is with those who steadfastly persevere."

284 A Commander is hampered by a large force if it is not in perfect discipline and does not wholeheartedly believe in its Commander. He must get rid of all the doubtful ones, as did Gideon before Saul, and Henry V, in Shakespeare's story long afterwards. Saul used the same test as Gideon: he gave a certain order when crossing a stream: the greater part disobeyed, and were sent back. Gideon's story will be found in Judges, 7:2-7.

285 Even in the small band that remained faithful, there were some who were appalled by the number of the enemy when they met him face to face, and saw the size and strength of the enemy Commander, the giant Goliath (Jalut). But there was a very small band who were determined to face all odds because they had perfect confidence in Allah and in the cause for which they were fighting. They were for making a firm stand and seeking Allah's help. Of that number was David: see next note.

250. When they advanced to meet Goliath and his forces, they prayed: "Our Lord! Pour out constancy on us and make our steps firm: Help us against those that reject faith."

251. By Allah.s will they routed them; and David(286) slew Goliath; and Allah gave him power and wisdom and taught him whatever (else) He willed(287). And did not Allah Check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief: But Allah is full of bounty to all the worlds(288).

286 Note how the whole story is compressed into a few words as regards narration, but its spiritual lessons are dwelt upon from many points of view. The Old Testament is mainly interested in the narrative, which is full of detail, but says little about the universal truths of which every true story is a parable. The Qur'an assumes the story, but tells the parable.

David was a raw youth, with no arms or armour. He was not known even in the Israelite camp, and the giant Goliath mocked him. Even David's own elder brother chided him for deserting his sheep, for he was a poor shepherd lad to outward appearance, but his faith had made him more than a match for the Philistine hosts. When Saul offered his own armour and arms to David, the young hero declined, as he had not tried them, while his shepherd's sling and staff were his well-tried implements. He picked up five smooth pebbles on the spot from the stream, and used his sling to such effect that he knocked down Goliath. He then used Goliath's own sword to slay him. There was consternation in the Philistine army: they broke and fled, and were pursued and cut to pieces.

Apart from the main lesson that if we would preserve our national existence and our faith it is our duty to fight with courage and firmness, there are other lessons in David's story: (1) numbers do not count, but faith, determination and the blessing of Allah; (2) size and strength are of no avail against truth, courage, and careful planning; (3) the hero tries his own weapons, and those that are available to him at the time and place, even though people may laugh at him; (4) if Allah is with us, the enemy's weapon may become an instrument of his own destruction; *(5)* personality conquers all dangers, and puts heart into our own wavering friends; (6) pure faith brings Allah's reward, which may take many forms: in David's case it was Power, Wisdom, and other gifts; see next note.

287 David was not only a shepherd, a warrior, a king, a wise man, and a prophet, but was also endowed with the gifts of poetry and music. (R).

288 Allah's plan is universal. He loves and protects *all* His creatures and His bounties are for all worlds (1:2 n. 20). To protect one He may have to check another, but we must never lose faith that His love is for all in boundless measure. (Cf. 22:40).

252. These are the Signs of Allah. we rehearse them to thee in truth: verily Thou art one of the messengers.

253. Those messengers We endowed with gifts, some above others(289): To one of them Allah spoke(290); others He raised to degrees (of honour)(291); to Jesus the son of Mary We gave clear (Signs)(292), and strengthened him with the holy spirit(292-A). If Allah had so willed, succeeding generations would not have fought among each other, after clear (Signs) had come to them, but they (chose) to wrangle, some believing and others rejecting. If Allah had so willed, they would not have fought each other; but Allah Fulfilleth His plan(293).

289 Different gifts and different modes of procedure are prescribed to Allah's Messengers in different ages, and perhaps their degrees are different though it is not for mortals, with our imperfect knowledge, to make any difference between one and another of Allah's Messengers (2:136). As this winds up the argument about fighting, three illustrations are given from the past, how it affected Allah's Messengers. To Moses Allah spoke directly: he led his men for forty years

through the wilderness, mainly fighting against the unbelief of his own people; he organised them to fight with the sword for Palestine, but was raised to Allah's mercy before his enterprise ripened, and it fell to Joshua to carry out his plan. David, though a mere shepherd boy, was chosen by Allah. He overthrew the greatest warrior of his time, became a king, and waged successful wars, being also a prophet, a poet, and musician. Jesus was "strengthened with the Holy Spirit": he was given no weapons to fight, and his mission was of a more limited character. In Muhammad's mission these and other characters were combined. Gentler than Jesus, he organised on a vaster scale than Moses, and from Mad i nah he ruled and gave laws, and the Qur'an has a vaster scope than the Psalms of David. *(Cf.* 2:285).

290 Moses: see note above

291 There is a two-fold sense: they were raised to high posts of honour, and they rose by degrees. I take the reference to be to David.

292 *Cf.* 2:87. See n. 401 to 3:62

292-A "Holy Spirit," according to commentators signifiers Gabriel. [Eds.]

293 If some power of choice was to be given to man, his selfishness inevitably caused divisions. It must not be supposed that it frustrates Allah's Plan. He carries it out as He will.

254. O ye who believe! Spend out of (the bounties)(294) We have provided for you, before the Day comes when no bargaining (Will avail), nor friendship nor intercession(295). Those who reject Faith they are the wrong-doers.

294 *Spend, i.e.,* give away in charity, or employ in good works, but do not hoard. Good works would in Islam include everything that advances the good of one that is in need whether a neighbour or a stranger, or that advances the good of the community, or even the good of the person himself to whom Allah has given the bounty. But it must be real good and there should be no admixture of baser motives, such as vainglory, or false indulgence, or encouragement of idleness, or playing off one person against another. The bounties include mental and spiritual gifts as well as wealth and material gifts.

295 *Cf.* 2:123 and 2:48 .

255. Allah. There is no god but He,-the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal(296). No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them(297). Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend(298) over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them(299) for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory).

296 This *is Ayat al Kursi,* the "Verse of the Throne". Who can translate its glorious meaning, or reproduce the rhythm of its well-chosen and comprehensive words? Even in the original Arabic the meaning seems to be greater than can be expressed in words. The attributes of Allah are different from anything we know in our present world: He lives, but His life is self-subsisting and eternal: it does not depend upon other beings and is not limited to time and space. Perhaps the attribute of *Qayyum* includes not only the idea of "Self-subsisting" but also the idea of "Keeping up and maintaining all life." His life being the source and constant support of all derived forms of life. Perfect life is perfect activity, in contrast to the imperfect life which we see around us, which is not only subject to death but to the need for rest or slowed-down activity, (something which is between activity and sleep, for which I, in common with other translators, have used the word "slumber") and the need for full sleep itself. But Allah has no need for rest or sleep. His activity, like His life, is perfect and self-subsisting. Contrast with this the expression used in Psalms 78:65: "Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine." *(Cf.* 20:109-110). (R).

297 After we realise that His Life is absolute Life, His Being is absolute Being, while others are contingent and evanescent, our ideas of heaven and earth vanish like shadows. What is behind that shadow is He. Such reality as our heavens and our earth possess is a reflection of His absolute Reality. The pantheist places the wrong accent when he says that everything is He. The truth is better expressed when we say that everything is His. How then can any creatures stand before Him as of right, and claim to intercede for a fellow-creature? In the first place both are His, and He cares as much for one as for the other. In the second place, they are both dependent on His will and command. But He in His Wisdom and Plan may grade His creatures and give one superiority over another. Then by His will and permission such a one may intercede or help according to the laws and duties laid on him. Allah's knowledge is absolute, and is not conditioned by Time or Space. To us, His creatures, these conditions always apply. His knowledge and our knowledge are therefore in different categories, and our knowledge only gets some reflection of Reality when it accords with His Will and Plan. *(Cf.* 20:110).

298 *Throne:* seat, power, knowledge, symbol of authority. In our thoughts we exhaust everything when we say "the heavens and the earth". Well, then, in everything is the working of Allah's power, and will, and authority. Everything of course includes spiritual things as well as things of sense. (R).

299 A life of activity that is imperfect or relative would not only need rest for carrying on its own activities, but would be in need of double rest when it has to look after and guard, or cherish, or help other activities. In contrast with this is the Absolute Life, which is free from any such need or contingency. For it is supreme above anything that we can conceive.

256. Let there be no compulsion(300) in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks(301). And Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

300 Compulsion is incompatible with religion: because (1) religion depends upon faith and will, and these would be meaningless if induced by force; (2) Truth and Error have been so clearly shown up by the mercy of Allah that there should be no doubt in the minds of any persons of good will as to the fundamentals of faith; (3) Allah's protection is continuous, and His Plan is always to lead us from the depths of darkness into the clearest light.

301 *Handhold:* something which the hands can grasp for safety in a moment of danger. It may be a loop or a handle, or anchor. If it is without flaw, so that there is no danger of breaking, our safety is absolutely assured so long as we hold fast to it. Our safety then depends on our own will and faith: Allah's help and protection will always be unfailing if we hold firmly to Allah and trust in Him. *(Cf.* 21:32).

257. Allah is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light. Of those who reject faith the patrons are the evil ones: from light they will lead them forth into the depths of darkness. They will be companions of the fire, to dwell therein (For ever).

258. Hast thou not Turned thy vision to one who disputed with Abraham(302) About his Lord, because Allah had granted him power? Abraham said: "My Lord is He Who Giveth life and death." He said: "I give life and death". Said Abraham: "But it is Allah that causeth the sun to rise from the east: Do thou then cause him to rise from the West." Thus was he confounded who (in arrogance) rejected faith. Nor doth Allah Give guidance to a people unjust(303).

302 The three verses 258-260 have been the subject of much controversy as to the exact meaning to be attached to the incidents and the precise persons alluded to, whose names are not mentioned. In such matters, where the Qur'an has given no names and the Prophet has himself given no indication, it seems to me useless to speculate, and still worse to put forward positive opinions. In questions of learning, speculations are often interesting. But it seems to me that the meaning of the Qur'an is so wide and universal that we are in danger of missing the real and eternal meaning if we go on disputing about minor points. All three incidents are such as may happen again and again in any prophet's lifetime, and be seen in impersonal vision at any time. Here they are connected with Al Mustafa's vision as shown by the opening words of verse 258. (R).

303 The first point illustrated is the pride of power, and the impotence of human power as against Allah's power. The person who disputed with Abraham may have been Nimrod or some ruler in Babylonia , or indeed elsewhere. I name Babylonia as it was the original home of Abraham (Ur of the Chaldees), and Babylon prided herself on her arts and sciences in the ancient world. Science can do many wonderful things; it could then; it can now. But the mystery of Life baffled science then, as it continues to baffle science now, after many centuries of progress. Abraham had faith, and referred back everything to the true Cause of Causes. A sceptical ruler might jestingly say: "I have the power of life and death." A man of science might say: "We have investigated the laws of life and death." Different kinds of powers lie in the hands of kings and men of knowledge. The claim in both cases is true in a very limited sense. But Abraham confounded the claimer by going back to fundamentals. "If you had the ultimate power, why could you not make the sun rise from the West?"

259. Or (take) the similitude of one who passed by a hamlet, all in ruins(304) to its roofs. He said: "Oh!

how shall Allah bring it (ever) to life, after (this) its death?" but Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him up (again). He said: "How long didst thou tarry (thus)?" He said: (Perhaps) a day or part of a day." He said: "Nay, thou hast tarried thus a hundred years; but look at thy food and thy drink; they show no signs of age; and look at thy donkey: And that We may make of thee a sign unto the people, Look further at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh(305)." When this was shown clearly to him, he said: "I know that Allah hath power over all things."

304 This incident is referred variously (1) to Ezekiel's vision of dry bones (Ezekiel, 37:1-10); (2) to Nehemiah's visit to Jerusalem in ruins after the Captivity, and to its rebuilding (Nehemiah, 2:11-20): and (3) to 'Uzayr, or Ezra, or Esdras, the scribe, priest, and reformer, who was sent by the Persian King after the Captivity to Jerusalem, and about whom there are many Jewish legends. As to (1), there are only four words in this verse about bones. As to (2) and (3), there is nothing specific to connect this verse with either. The wording is perfectly general, and we must understand it as general. I think it does refer not only to individual, but to national death and resurrection.

305 A man is in despair when he sees the destruction of a whole people, city, or civilisation. But Allah can cause resurrection as He has done many times in history, and as He will do at the final Resurrection. Time is nothing before Allah. The doubter thinks that he has been dead or "tarried thus" a day or less when the period has been a century. On the other hand, the food and drink which he left behind is intact, and as fresh as it was when he left it. But the donkey is not only dead, but nothing but bones is left of it. And before the man's eyes, the bones are reunited, clothed with flesh and blood, and restored to life. Moral: (1) Time is nothing to Allah; (2) It affects different things in different ways; (3) The keys of life and death are in Allah's hands; (4) Man's power is nothing; his faith should be in Allah.

260. Behold! Abraham said: "My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead(306)." He said: "Dost thou not then believe?" He said: "Yea! but to satisfy My own understanding(307)." He said: "Take four birds; Tame them to turn to thee; put a portion(308) of them on every hill and call to them: They will come to thee (Flying) with speed. Then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise."

306 Verse 258, we saw, illustrated Allah's power over Life and Death, contrasted with man's vain boasts or imaginings. Verse 259 illustrated how Time is immaterial to Allah's workings; things; individuals and nations are subject to laws of life and death, which are under Allah's complete control, however much we may be misled by appearances. (R).

307 Abraham had complete faith in Allah's power, but he wanted, with Allah's permission, to give an explanation of that faith to his own heart and mind. Where I have translated "satisfy my own understanding," the literal translation would be "satisfy my own heart."

308 *A portion of* them: Juz*'an*. The Commentators understand this to mean that the birds were to be cut up and pieces of them were to be put on the hills. The cutting up or killing is not mentioned, but they say that it is implied by an ellipsis, as the question is how Allah gives life to the dead. (R).

261. The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn: it groweth seven ears, and each ear Hath a hundred grains. Allah giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth: And Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things.

262. Those who spend their substance in the cause of Allah, and follow not up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury,-for them their reward is with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

263. Kind words(309) and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury. Allah is free of all wants, and He is Most-Forbearing.

309 A very high standard is set for chanty. (1) It must be in the way of Allah. (2) It must expect no reward in this world. (3) It must not be followed by references or reminders to the act of charity. (4) Still less should any annoyance or injury be caused to the recipient, *e.g.,* by boasting that the giver relieved the person in the hour of need. Indeed, the kindness and the spirit which turns a blind eye to other people's faults or shortcomings is the essence of charity: these things are better than charity if charity is spoilt by tricks that do harm. At the same time, while no reward is to be *expected,* there is abundant reward from Allah — material, moral, and spiritual — according to His own good pleasure and plan. If we spend in the way of Allah, it is not as if Allah was in need of our charity. On the contrary our shortcomings are so great that we require His utmost forbearance before any good that we can do can merit His praise or reward. Our motives are so mixed that our best may really be very poor if judged by a very strict standard. *(Cf.* 2:215 and 2:273-276).

264. O ye who believe! cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury,- like those who spend their substance to be seen of men, but believe neither in Allah nor in the Last Day(310). They are in parable like a hard, barren rock, on which is a little soil: on it falls heavy rain, which leaves it (Just) a bare stone. They will be able to do nothing with aught they have earned. And Allah guideth not those who reject faith.

310 False charity, "to be seen of men," is really no charity. It is worse, for it betokens a disbelief in Allah and the Hereafter. "Allah seeth well whatever ye do" (2:265). It is compared to hard barren rock on which by chance has fallen a little soil. Good rain, which renders fertile soil more fruitful, washes away the little soil which this rock had, and exposes its nakedness. What good can hypocrites derive even from the little wealth they may have amassed?

265. And the likeness of those who spend their substance, seeking to please Allah and to strengthen their souls, is as a garden, high and fertile: heavy rain(311) falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest, and if it receives not Heavy rain, light moisture sufficeth it. Allah seeth well whatever ye do.

311 True charity is like a field with good soil on a high situation. It catches good showers of rain, the moisture penetrates the soil, and yet its elevated situation keeps it well-drained, and healthy favourable conditions increase its output enormously. But supposing even that the rain is not abundant, it catches dew and makes the most of any little moisture it can get, and that is sufficient for it. So a man of true charity is spiritually healthy; he is best situated to attract the bounties of Allah, which he does not hoard selfishly but circulates freely. In lean times he still produces good works, and is content with what he has. He looks to Allah's pleasure and the strengthening of his own soul.

266. Does any of you wish that he should have a garden(312) with date-palms and vines and streams flowing underneath, and all kinds of fruit, while he is stricken with old age, and his children are not strong (enough(313) to look after themselves)- that it should be caught in a whirlwind, with fire therein, and be burnt up? Thus doth Allah make clear to you (His) Signs; that ye may consider.

312 The truly spiritual nature of charity having been explained in three parables (2:261, 264, 265) a fourth parable is now added, explaining its bearing on the whole of our life. Suppose we had a beautiful garden well-watered and fertile, with delightful views of streams, and a haven of rest for mind and body; suppose old age were creeping in on us, and our children were either too young to look after themselves or too feeble in health; how should we feel if a sudden whirlwind came with lightning or fire in its train, and burnt it up, thus blasting the whole of our hopes for the present and for the future, and destroying the result of all our labour and savings in the past? Well, this life of ours is a probation. We may work hard, we may save, we may have good luck. We may make ourselves a goodly pleasance, and have ample means of support for ourselves and our children. A great whirlwind charged with lightning and fire comes and burns up the whole show. We are too old to begin again: our children are too young or feeble to help us to repair the mischief. Our chance is lost, because we did not provide against such a contingency. The whirlwind is the "wrath to come": the provision against it is a life of true charity and righteousness, which is the only source of true and lasting happiness in this world and the next. Without it we are subject to all the vicissitudes of this uncertain life. We may even spoil our so-called "charity" by insisting on the obligation which others owe to us or by doing some harm, because our motives are not pure.

313 *Not strong (enough): du'afa'u:* literally weak, decrepit, infirm, possibly referring to both health and will or character.

267. O ye who believe! Give of the good things which ye have (honourably) earned(314), and of the fruits of the earth which We have produced for you, and do not even aim(315) at getting anything which is bad, in order that out of it ye may give away something, when ye yourselves would not receive it except with closed eyes(316). And know that Allah is Free of all wants, and worthy of all praise(317).

314 According to the English proverb "Charity covers a multitude of sins". Such a sentiment is strongly disapproved in Islam. Charity has value only if (1) something good and valuable is given, (2) which has been honourably earned or acquired by the giver, or (3) which is produced in nature and can be referred to as a bounty of Allah. (1) may include such things as are of use and value to others though they may be of less use to us or superfluous to us on account of our having acquired something more suitable for our station in life: for example, discarded clothes, or an old horse or a used motor car; but if the horse is vicious, or the car engine so far gone that it is dangerous to use, then the gift is worse than useless; it is positively harmful, and the giver is a wrongdoer. (2) applies to fraudulent company-promoters, who earn great credit by giving away in charity some of their ill-gotten gains, or to robbers (even if they call themselves by high-sounding names) who "rob Peter to pay Paul". Islam will have nothing to do with tainted property. Its economic code requires that every gain should be honest and honourable. Even "charity" would not cover or destroy the taint. (3) lays down a test in cases of a doubtful gain. Can we refer to it as a gift of Allah? Obviously the produce of honest labour or agriculture can be so referred to. In modern commerce and speculation there is much of quite the contrary character, and charity will not cover the taint. Some kinds of art, skill or talent are God-given: it is the highest kind of charity to teach them or share their product. Others are the contrary: they are bad or tainted. In the same way some professions or services may be tainted, if these tend to moral harm.

315 The preceding note tries to indicate some of the things which are bad or tainted. We should not even think of acquiring them for ourselves, soothing our conscience by the salve that we shall practise charity out of them.

316 *Closed eyes* imply disgust or connivance because of some feature which we would not openly acknowledge.

317 To dedicate tainted things to Allah is a dishonour to Allah. Who is independent of all wants, and who is worthy of all honour and praise. *(Cf.* 22:64).

268. The Evil one threatens you with poverty and bids you to conduct unseemly. Allah promiseth you His forgiveness and bounties(318). And Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things.

318 Good and evil draw us opposite ways and by opposite motives, and the contrast is well-marked out in charity. When we think of doing some real act of kindness or charity, we are assailed with doubts and fear of impoverishment; but Evil supports any tendency to selfishness, greed, or even to extravagant expenditure for show, or self-indulgence, or unseemly appetites. On the other hand, Allah draws us on to all that is kind and good, for that way lies the forgiveness of our sins, and greater real prosperity and satisfaction. No kind or generous act ever ruined any one. It is false generosity that is sometimes shown as leading to ruin. As Allah knows all our motives and cares for all, and has everything in His power, it is obvious which course a wise man will choose. But wisdom is rare, and it is only wisdom that can appreciate true well-being and distinguish it from the false appearance of well-being.

269. He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding.

270. And whatever ye spend in charity or devotion, be sure Allah knows it all. But the wrong-doers have no helpers.

271. If ye disclose (acts(319) of) charity, even so it is well, but if ye conceal them, and make them reach those (really) in need, that is best for you: It will remove from you some of your (stains of) evil. And Allah is well acquainted with what ye do.

319 It is better to seek no publicity in charity. But if it is known there is no harm. If it is for public purposes, it must necessarily be known, and a pedantic show of concealment may itself be a fault. The harm of publicity lies in motives of ostentation. We can better reach the really deserving poor by quietly seeking for them. The spiritual benefit ensures to our own souls, provided our motives are pure, and we are really seeking the good pleasure of Allah.

272. It is not required of thee (O Messenger., to set them on the right path(320), but Allah sets on the right path whom He pleaseth. Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls, and ye shall only do so seeking the "Face(321)" of Allah. Whatever good ye give, shall be rendered back to you, and ye shall not Be dealt with unjustly.

320 In connection with charity this means that we must relieve those really in need, whether they are good or bad, on the right path or not, Muslims or otherwise. It is not for us to judge in these matters. Allah will give light according to His wisdom. Incidentally it adds a further meaning to the command, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2:256). For compulsion may not only be by force, but by economic necessity. In matters of religion we must not even compel by a bribe of charity. The chief motive in charity should be Allah's pleasure and our own Spiritual good. This was addressed in the first instance to Al Mustafa in Madinah, but it is of universal application.

321 See note to 2:112, *Wajh* means literally: face, countenance; hence, favour, glory, Self, Presence.

273. (Charity is) for those in need, who, in Allah.s cause (322)are restricted (from travel), and cannot move about in the land, seeking (For trade or work): the ignorant man thinks, because of their modesty, that they are free from want. Thou shalt know them by their (Unfailing) mark: They beg not importunately from all the sundry. And whatever of good ye give, be assured Allah knoweth it well.

322 Indiscriminate acts of so-called charity are condemned as they may do more harm than good (see 2:262). The real beneficiaries of charity are indicated. They must be in want. And the want must be due to some honourable cause. For example, they may be doing some unpaid service, such as teaching, or acquiring knowledge or skill, or be in exile for their faith, or in other ways be prevented from seeking employment or doing strenuous work. "Allah's cause" must not be narrowly interpreted. All sincere and real service to humanity comes within the definition. Such men do not beg from door to door. It is the duty of those who are well-to-do, or the Public Purse, to find them out. *(Cf.* 51:19). (R).

274. Those who (in charity)(323) spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public, have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

323 We recapitulate the beauty of charity *(i.e.,* unselfish giving of one's self or one's goods) before we come to its opposite, *i.e.,* the selfish grasping greed of usury against those in need or distress. Charity instead of impoverishing you will enrich you: you: will have more happiness and less fear. Contrast it with what follows-the degradation of the grasping usurer.

275. Those who devour usury(324) will not stand except as stand one whom the Evil one by his touch Hath driven to madness(325). That is because they say: "Trade is like usury(326)," but Allah hath permitted trade and forbidden usury. Those who after receiving direction from their Lord, desist, shall be pardoned for the past; their case is for Allah (to judge); but those who repeat (The offence) are companions of the Fire: They will abide therein (for ever).

324 Usury is condemned and prohibited in the strongest possible terms. There can be no question about the prohibition. When we come to the definition of usury there is room for difference of opinion. 'Umar, according to Ibn Kathir, felt some difficulty in the matter, as the Prophet left this world before the details of the question were settled. This was one of the three questions on which he wished he had had more light from the Prophet, the other two being *Khilafah* and *Kafalah* (see 4:12 , n. 518). Our 'Ulama', ancient and modern, have worked out a great body of literature on usury, based mainly on economic conditions as they existed at the rise of Islam. *(Cf.* 3:130). (R).

325 An apt simile: whereas legitimate trade or industry increases the prosperity and stability of men and nations, a dependence on usury would merely encourage a race of idlers, cruel blood-suckers, and worthless fellows who do not know their own good and therefore akin to madmen.

326 Owing to the fact that interest occupies a central position in modern economic life, and specially since interest is the very life blood of the existing financial institutions, a number of Muslims have been inclined to interpret it in a manner which is radically different from the understanding of Muslim scholars throughout the last fourteen centuries and is also sharply in conflict with the categorical statements of the Prophet (peace be on him). According to Islamic teachings any excess on the capital is *rib'a* (interest). Islam accepts no distinction, insofar as prohibition is concerned, between reasonable and exorbitant rates of interest, and thus what came to be regarded as the difference between usury and interest; nor between returns on bonus for consumption and those for production purposes and so on. [Eds.].

276. Allah will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity: For He loveth not creatures ungrateful and wicked.

277. Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity, will have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve(327).

327 The contrast between charity and unlawful grasping of wealth began at 2:274, where this phrase occurs as a theme. Here the theme finishes with the same phrase. The following four verses refer to further concessions on behalf of debtors, as creditors are asked to (a) give up even claims arising out of the past on account of usury, and(b) to give time for payment of capital if necessary, or (c) to write off the debt altogether as an art of charity.

278. O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and give up what remains of your demand for usury, if ye are indeed believers.

279. If ye do it not, Take notice of war(328) from Allah and His Messenger. But if ye turn back, ye shall have your capital sums: Deal not unjustly, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly.

328 This is not war for opinions, but an ultimatum of war for the liberation of debtors unjustly dealt with and oppressed.

280. If the debtor is in a difficulty, grant him time Till it is easy for him to repay. But if ye remit it by way of charity, that is best for you if ye only knew.

281. And fear the Day when ye shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.

282. O ye who believe! When ye deal with each other, in transactions involving future obligations in a fixed period of time, reduce them to writing(329) Let a scribe write down faithfully as between the parties: let not the scribe refuse to write: as Allah(330) Has taught him, so let him write. Let him who incurs the liability dictate, but let him fear His Lord Allah, and not diminish aught of what he owes. If they party liable is mentally deficient, or weak, or unable Himself to dictate(331), Let his guardian dictate faithfully, and get two witnesses, out of your own men(332), and if there are not two men, then a man and two women, such as ye choose, for witnesses, so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her. The witnesses should not refuse when they are called on (For evidence). Disdain not to reduce to writing (your contract) for a future period, whether it be small or big: it is juster in the sight of Allah, More suitable as evidence, and more convenient to prevent doubts among yourselves but if it be a transaction hich ye carry out on the spot among yourselves, there is no blame on you if ye reduce it not to writing. But take witness whenever ye make a commercial contract; and let neither scribe nor witness suffer harm. If ye do (such harm), it would be wickedness in you. So fear Allah; For it is Allah that teaches you. And Allah is well acquainted with all things(333). If ye are on a journey, and cannot find a scribe, a pledge with possession (may serve the purpose)(334). And if one of you deposits a thing on trust with another(335), let the trustee (faithfully) discharge his trust, and let him Fear his Lord conceal not evidence; for whoever conceals it, - his heart is tainted(336) with sin. And Allah knoweth all that ye do.

329 The first part of the verse deals with transactions involving future payment or future consideration, and the second part with transactions in which payment and delivery are made on the spot. Examples of the former are if goods are brought now and payment is promised at a fixed time and place in the future, or if cash is paid now and delivery is contracted for at a fixed time and place in the future. In such cases a written document is recommended, but it is held that the words later on in this verse, that it is 'juster... more suitable as evidence, and more convenient to prevent doubts," etc., imply that it is not obligatory in law. Examples of the latter kind-cash payment and delivery on the spot-require no evidence in writing, but apparently oral witnesses to such transactions are recommended.

330 The scribe in such matters assumes a fiduciary capacity; he should therefore remember to act as in the presence of Allah, with full justice to both parties. The art of writing he should look upon as a gift from Allah, and he should use it as in His service. In an illiterate population the scribe's position is still more responsible.

331 Possibly the person "mentally deficient, or weak, or unable to dictate," may also be incapable of making a valid contract, and the whole duty would be on his guardian, who again must act in perfect good faith, not only protecting but vigilantly promoting the interests of his ward.

332 It is desirable that the men (or women) who are chosen as witness should be from the circle to which the parties belong, as they would best be able to understand the transaction, and be most easily available if their evidence is required in future.

333 Commercial morality is here taught on the highest plane and yet in the most practical manner, both as regards the bargains to be made, the evidence to be provided, the doubts to be avoided, and the duties and rights of scribes and witnesses. Probity even in worldly matters is to be, not a mere matter of convenience or policy, but a matter of conscience and religious duty. Even our everyday transactions are to be carried out as in the presence of Allah.

334 A pledge or security stands on its own independent footing, though it is a very convenient form of closing the bargain where the parties cannot trust each other, and cannot get a written agreement with proper witnesses.

335 The Law of Deposit implies great trust in the Depositary on the part of the Depositor. The Depositary becomes a trustee, and the doctrine of Trust can be further developed on that basis. The trustee's duty is to guard the interests of the person on whose behalf he holds the trust and to render back the property and accounts when required according to the terms of the trust. This duty again is linked to the sanction of Religion, which requires a higher standard than Law.

336 It sometimes happens that if some inconvenient piece of evidence is destroyed or concealed, we gain a great advantage materially. We are warned not to yield to such a temptation. The concealment of evidence has a serious effect on our own moral and spiritual life, for it taints the very source of higher life, as typified by the heart. The heart is also the seat of our secrets. We are told that the sin will reach our most secret being, though the sin may not be visible or open to the world. Further, the heart is the seat of our affections, and false dealing taints all our affections.

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284. To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth. Whether ye show what is in your minds or conceal it, Allah Calleth you to account for it. He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and punisheth whom He pleaseth, for Allah hath power over all things.

285. The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His Messengers(337). "We make no distinction (they say) between one and another(338) of His messengers." And they say: "We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness(339), our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys."

337 This Surah started with the question of faith (2:3-4), showed us various aspects of faith and the denial of faith, gave us ordinances for the new people of Islam as a community, and now rounds off the argument again with a confession of faith and of its practical manifestation in conduct ("we hear and we obey"), and closes on a note of humility, so that we may confess our sins, ask for forgiveness, and pray for Allah's help and guidance. *(Cf.* 24:51).

338 *Cf.* 2:253, n. 289. It is not for us to make any distinction between one and another of Allah's Messengers; we must honour them all equally, though we know that Allah in His wisdom sent them with different kinds of mission and gave them different degrees of rank.

339 When our faith and conduct are sincere, we realise how far from perfection we are, and we humbly pray to Allah for the forgiveness of our sins. We feel that Allah imposes no burden on us that we cannot bear, and with this realisation in our hearts and in the confession of our lips, we go to Him and ask for His help and guidance. *(Cf.* 24:51).

286. On no soul doth Allah Place a burden greater than it can bear(340). It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns. (Pray:) "Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden Like that which Thou didst lay on those before us(341); Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us. Thou art our Protector; Help us against those who stand against faith."

340 *Cf.* 2:233. In that verse the burden was in terms of material wealth; here it is in terms of spiritual duty. Assured by Allah that He will accept from each soul just such duty as it has the ability to offer, we pray further on for the fulfilment of that promise. *(Cf.* 23:62).

341 We must not be arrogant, and think that because Allah has granted us His favour and mercy we have no need to *exert* ourselves, or that we are ourselves superior to those before us. On the contrary, knowing how much they failed, we pray that our burdens should be lightened, and we confess our realisation that we have all the greater need for Allah's mercy and forgiveness. And so we end the whole argument of the Surah with a prayer for Allah's help, not in our own selfish ends, but in our resolve to uphold Allah's truth against all Unbelief.

3. Al 'Imran (The Family of 'Imran)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. **A. L. M(342).**

342 See note to 2:1.

2. **Allah. There is no god but He,-the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal(343).**

343 *Cf.* 2:255.

3. **It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel(344) (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion(345) (of judgment between right and wrong).**

344 In some editions the break between verses 3 and 4 occurs here in the middle of the sentence, but in the edition of *Hafiz* 'Uthman , followed by the Egyptian Concordance *Path al Rahman,* the break occurs at the word *Furqan.* In verse-divisions our classicists have mainly followed rhythm. As the word *Furqan* from this point of view is parallel to the word *Intiq a m,* which ends the next verse, I have accepted the verse-division at *Furqan* as more in consonance with Qur'anic rhythm. It makes no real difference to the numbering of the verses, as there is only a question of whether one line should go into verse 3 or verse 4. (R).

345 *Criterion: Furqan:* for meaning see 2:53 n. 68,

4. **Then those who reject Faith in the Signs of Allah will suffer the severest penalty, and Allah is Exalted in Might, Lord of Retribution.**

5. **From Allah, verily nothing is hidden on earth or in the heavens.**

6. **He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He pleases(346). There is no god but He, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.**

346 Who can penetrate the mystery of life when a new life is just being born, except Allah? The reference to the mystery of birth prepares us for the mystery of the birth Jesus mentioned in 3:41 and the following verses.

7. **He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation(347) of the Book: others are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded(348) in knowledge say: "We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord:" and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding.**

347 This passage gives us an important clue to the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an. Broadly speaking it may be divided into two portions, not given separately, but intermingled: *viz.* (1) the nucleus or foundation of the Book, literally "the mother of the Book", (2) the part which is not of well-established meaning. It is very fascinating to take up the latter, and exercise our ingenuity about its inner meaning, but it refers to such profound spiritual matters that human language is inadequate to it, and though people of wisdom may get some light from it, no one should be dogmatic, as the final meaning is known to Allah alone. The Commentators usually understand the verses "of established meaning" *(muhkam)* to refer to the categorical orders of the Shan'ah (or the Law), which are plain to everyone's understanding. But perhaps the meaning is wider: the "mother of the Book" must include the very foundation on which all law rests, the essence of Allah's Message, as distinguished from the various illustrative parables, allegories, and ordinances *(Cf.* 11:1). (R).

348 One reading, rejected by the majority of Commentators, but accepted by Mujahid and others, would not make a break at the point here marked *Waqf Lazim,* but would run the two sentences together. In that case the construction would run: "No one knows its hidden meanings except Allah and those who are firm in knowledge. They say", etc.

8. **"Our Lord!" (they say), "Let not our hearts deviate now after Thou hast guided us, but grant us mercy from Thine own Presence; for Thou art the Grantor of bounties without measure.**

9. **"Our Lord! Thou art He that will gather mankind Together against a day about which there is no doubt; for Allah never fails in His promise(349)."**

349 This is the prayer of those who are firmly grounded in knowledge. The more they know, the more they realise how little they know of all the depths of Truth in the spiritual worlds. But they have Faith. The glimpses they get of Truth they wish to hold fast in their hearts, and they pray to Allah to preserve them from deviating even from what light they have got. They are sure of their eventual return to Allah, when all doubts will be solved.

10. **Those who reject Faith,- neither their possessions nor their (numerous) progeny will avail them aught against Allah. They are themselves but fuel for the Fire.**

11. **(Their plight will be) no better than that of the people of Pharaoh(350), and their predecessors: They denied our Signs, and Allah called them to account for their sins. For Allah is strict in punishment.**

350 From the beginning of the world, sin, oppression, arrogance, and want of Faith have gone together. The Pharaoh of the time of Moses relied upon his power, his territory, his armies, and his resources to mock at Moses the messenger of Allah and to oppress the people of Moses. Allah saved the Israelites and punished their oppressors through many plagues and calamities. (R).

12. **Say to those who reject Faith: "Soon will ye be vanquished(351) and gathered together to Hell,-an evil bed indeed (to lie on)!**

351 As Moses warned the Egyptians, so the warning is here sounded to the Pagan Arabs, the Jews and the Christians, and all who resisted Faith, that their resistance would be in vain. Already the battle of Badr (referred to in the next verse) had been a warning how Faith must conquer with the help of Allah. The next few decades saw the Byzantine and the Persian Empires overthrown because of their arrogance and their resistance to the Law of Allah.

13. **"There has already been for you a Sign in the two armies that met (in combat)(352): One was fighting in the cause of Allah, the other resisting Allah. these saw with their own eyes Twice their number(353). But Allah doth support with His aid whom He pleaseth. In this is a warning for such as have eyes to see."**

352 This refers to the battle of Badr in Ramadan in the second year of the Hijrah. The little exiled community of Makkan Muslims, with their friends in Madman, had organised themselves into a God-fearing community, but were constantly in danger of being attacked by their Pagan enemies of Makkah, in alliance with some of the disaffected elements (Jews and Hypocrites) in or near Madmah itself. The design of the Makkans was to gather all the resources they could, and with an overwhelming force, to crush and annihilate Muhammad and his party. To this end Abu Sufyan was leading a richly-laden caravan from Syria to Makkah. He called for armed aid from Makkah. The battle was fought in the plain of Badr, about 50 miles southwest of Madmah. The Muslim force consisted of only about 313 men, mostly ill-armed, but they were led by Muhammad, and they were fighting for their Faith. The Makkan army, well-armed and well-equipped, numbered over a thousand and had among its leaders some of the most experienced warriors of Arabia , including Abu Jahl, the inveterate foe and

persecutor of Islam. Against all odds the Muslims won a brilliant victory, and many of the enemy leaders, including Abu Jahl, were killed *(Cf.* 30:40). (R).

353 It was impossible, without the miraculous aid of Allah, for such a small and ill-equipped force as was the Muslim band, to defeat the large and well-found force of the enemy. But their firmness, zeal, and discipline won them divine aid. Enemy prisoners stated that the enemy ranks saw the Muslim force to be many times larger than it was.

14. Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet(354): Women and sons; Heaped-up hoards of gold and silver; horses branded (for blood and excellence); and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this world´s life; but in nearness to Allah is the best of the goals (To return to).

354 The pleasures of this world are first enumerated: women for love; sons for strength and pride; hoarded riches, which procure all luxuries; the best and finest pedigree horses; cattle, the measure of wealth in the ancient world, as well as the means and symbols of good farming in the modern world; and broad acres of well-tilled land. By analogy, we may include, for our mechanised age, machines of all kinds - tractors, motorcars, aeroplanes, the best internal-combustion engines, etc.,etc. In "heaped-up hoards of gold and silver," the Arabic word translated hoards is *qanatir* plural of *qintar,* which literally means a talent of 1,200 ounces of gold. (R).

15. Say: Shall I give you glad tidings of things Far better than those? For the righteous are Gardens in nearness to their Lord, with rivers flowing beneath; therein is their eternal home; with companions pure (and holy)(355); and the good pleasure of Allah. For in Allah.s sight are (all) His servants,-

355 *Cf.*.2:25 and n. 44.

16. (Namely), those who say: "Our Lord! we have indeed believed: forgive us, then, our sins, and save us from the agony of the Fire;"-

17. Those who show patience, Firmness and self-control(356); who are true (in word and deed); who worship devoutly; who spend (in the way of Allah.; and who pray for forgiveness in the early hours of the morning(357).

356 *Sabr (Sabirin)* includes many shades of meaning: I have specified three here, *viz.,* patience, firmness, and self-control. See 2:45 and 2:153 and notes thereon.

357 True servants of Allah are described in 3:16 and 17. They have faith, humility, and hope (3:16); and they have certain virtues (3:17) *viz.,* (1) patience, steadfastness, self-restraint, and all that goes under the full definition of *Sabr:* this shows a certain attitude of mind; (2) in all their dealings they are true and sincere as they are also in their promises and words; this marks them out in social conduct; (3) further, their spiritual worship is earnest and deep, an inner counterpart of their outward conduct; (4) their worship of Allah shows itself in their love of their fellow-men, for they are ready and liberal in charity; and (5) their self-discipline is so great that the first thing they do every morning is humbly to approach their God.

18. There is no god but He: That is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm(358)on justice. There is no god but He, the Exalted in Power, the Wise.

358 Allah Himself speaks to us through His revelations (through angels) and through His Creation, for all Nature glorifies Allah. No thinking mind, if it only judges the matter fairly, can fail to find the same witness in his own heart and conscience. All this points to the Unity of Allah. His exalted nature, and His wisdom.

19. The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will): Nor did the People of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of each other(359), after knowledge had come to them. But if any deny the Signs of Allah, Allah is swift in calling to account.

359 *Baghyan:* through envy, through selfish contumacy or obstinacy, through sheer contrary- mindedness, or desire to resist or rebel. *Cf.* 2:90, and 2:213.

20. So if they dispute with thee, say: "I have submitted My whole self(360) to Allah and so have those who follow me." And say to the People of the Book and to those who are unlearned(361): "Do ye (also) submit yourselves?" If they do, they are in right guidance, but if they turn back, Thy duty is to convey the Message; and in Allah.s sight are (all) His servants(362).

360 *Wajh:* whole self. See n. 114 to 2:112.

361 The People of the Book may be supposed to know something about the previous religious history of mankind. To them the appeal should be easy and intelligible, as all religion is one, and it is only being renewed in Islam. But the appeal is also made to the pagan Arabs, who are unlearned, and who can well be expected to follow the example of one of their own, who received divine enlightenment, and was able to bring new knowledge to them. A great many of both these classes did so. But the few who resisted Allah's grace, and actually threatened and persecuted those who believed, are told that Allah will look after His own.

362 Note the literary skill in the argument as it proceeds. The mystery of birth faintly suggests that we are coming to the story of Jesus. The exposition of the Book suggests that Islam is the same religion as that of the People of the Book. Next we are told that the People of the Book made their religion one-sided, and through the priesthood of the family of 'Imran, we are brought to the story of Jesus, who was rejected by a body of the Jews as Muhammad was rejected by a body of both Jews and Christians.

21. As to those who deny the Signs of Allah and in defiance of right(363), slay the prophets, and slay those who teach just dealing with mankind(364), announce to them a grievous penalty.

363 *Right: haqq* has many shades of meaning: (1) right, in the sense of having a right to something; (2) right, in the sense of straight conduct, as opposed to wrong; (3) truth; (4) justice. All these shades are implied here.

364 Examples of the Prophets slain were: "the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar": Matt. 23:35. *Cf.* 2:61. n. 75. Again, John the Baptist (Yahya, noble, chaste, a prophet, of the goodly company of the righteous, 3:39), was bound, imprisoned, and beheaded, and his head presented to a dancing harlot: Matt. 14:1-11 *(Cf.* 4:155).

22. They are those whose works will bear no fruit(365) in this world and in the Hereafter nor will they have anyone to help.

365 *Cf.* 2:217, end.

23. Hast thou not turned Thy vision to those who have been given a portion(366) of the Book? They are invited to the Book of Allah, to settle their dispute, but a party of them Turn back and decline (The arbitration)(367).

366 *A portion of the Book.* I conceive that Allah's revelation as a whole throughout the ages is "The Book". The Law of Moses, and the Gospel of Jesus were portions of the Book. The Qur'an completes the revelation and is *par excellence* the Book of Allah *(Cf.* 4:44).

367 The Commentators mention a particular incident when a dispute was submitted by the Jews for arbitration to the Prophet. He appealed to the authority of their own books, but they tried to conceal and prevaricate. The general lesson is that the People of the Book should have been the first to welcome in Muhammad the living exponent of the Message of Allah as a whole, and some of them did so; but others turned away from guilty arrogance, relying on corrupted texts and doctrines forged out of their own fancies, though they were not conformable to reason and good sense.

24. This because they say: "The Fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days(368)": For their forgeries deceive them as to their own religion.

368 *Cf.* 2:80.

25. But how (will they fare) when we gather them together against a day about which there is no doubt, and each soul will be paid out just what it has earned, without (favour or) injustice?

26. Say: "O Allah. Lord of Power (And Rule), Thou givest power to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest off power from whom Thou pleasest: Thou enduest with honour whom Thou pleasest, and Thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest: In Thy hand is all good(369). Verily, over all things Thou hast power.

369 Another glorious passage, full of meaning. The governing phrase in it all is: "In Thy hand is all Good." What is the standard by which we may judge Good? It is Allah's Will. Therefore when we submit to Allah's Will, and real Islam illuminates us we see the highest Good. There has been and is much controversy as to what is the Highest Good. To the Muslim there is no difficulty: it is the Will of Allah, He must ever strive to learn and understand that Will. But once in that fortress, he is secure. He is not troubled with the nature of Evil.

27. "Thou causest the night to gain on the day, and thou causest the day to gain on the night(370); Thou bringest the Living out of the dead, and Thou bringest the dead out of the Living(371); and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest, without measure(372)."

370 True in many senses. In every twenty-four hours, night merges into day, and day into night, and there is no clear boundary between them. In every solar year, the night gains on the day after the summer solstice, and the day gains on the night after the winter solstice. But further, if light and darkness are viewed as symbols of (a) knowledge and ignorance, (b) happiness and misery, (c) spiritual insight and spiritual blindness, Allah's Plan or Will works here too as in the physical world, and in His hand is all Good.

371 We can interpret Dead and Living in even more senses than Day and Night: death physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual. Life and Death may also apply to collective, group, or national life. And who has ever solved the mystery of Life? But Faith refers is to Allah's Will and Plan *(Cf.* 10:31).

372 Again true in all the senses suggested in the two previous notes. The only Eternal Reality is Allah. All else has its basis and sustenance in Him. Lst our little minds create fear out of "nicely calculated less or more", we are told at once that Allah's bounty is without measure or account.

28. Let not the believers Take for friends or helpers Unbelievers rather than believers: if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah. except by way of precaution, that ye may Guard yourselves from them(373). But Allah cautions you (To remember) Himself; for the final goal is to Allah.

373 If Faith is a fundamental matter in our lives our associations and friendships will naturally be with those who share our faith. "Evil communications corrupt good manners": and evil company may corrupt faith. In our ordinary everyday affairs of business, we are asked to seek the help of Believers rather than Unbelievers. Only in this way can our community be strong in organisation and unity. But where there is no question of preference, or where in self-defence we have to take the assistance of those not belonging to our faith, that is permissible. In any case we must not weaken our brotherhood: we must try to make it stronger if possible.

29. Say: "Whether ye hide what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah knows it all: He knows what is in the heavens, and what is on earth. And Allah has power over all things.

30. "On the Day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done, and all the evil it has done, it will wish there were a great distance between it and its evil. But Allah cautions you (To remember) Himself. And Allah is full of kindness to those that serve Him."

31. Say: "If ye do love Allah, Follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins: For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

32. Say: "Obey Allah and His Messenger.: But if they turn back, Allah loveth not those who reject Faith.

33. Allah did choose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of ´Imran above all people,-

34. Offspring, one of the other(374): And Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

374 The Prophets in the Jewish-Christian-Muslim dispensation form one family literally. But the argument is wider. All men of God form spiritually one family. If you love and obey Allah, love and obey His Messenger; your love, obedience, and discipline will be the test of your faith.

35. Behold! a woman of ´Imran(375) said: "O my Lord! I do dedicate unto Thee what is in my womb for Thy special service(376): So accept this of me: For Thou hearest and knowest all things."

375 Now we begin the story of Jesus. As a prelude we have the birth of Mary and the parallel story of John the Baptist, Yahya the son of Zakariya. Yahya's mother Elizabeth was a cousin of Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:36), and therefore John and Jesus were cousins by blood, and there was a spiritual cousinhood in their birth and career. Elizabeth was of the daughters of Aaron (Luke 1:5), of a priestly family which went back to Aaron the brother of Moses and son of 'Imran. Her husband Zakariya was actually a priest, and her cousin Mary was presumably also of a priestly family. By tradition Mary's mother was called Hannah (in Latin, Anna, and in English, Anne), and her father was called 'Imran. Hannah is therefore both a descendant of the priestly house of 'Imran and the wife of 'Imran,-"a woman of 'Imran" in a double sense.

376 *Muharram=freed* from all worldly affairs and specially dedicated to Allah's service. She expected a son, who was to be a special devotee, a miraculous son of the old age of his parents, but Allah gave her instead a daughter. But that daughter was Mary the mother of Jesus, the chosen one among the women; 3:42 .

36. When she was delivered, she said: "O my Lord! Behold! I am delivered of a female child!"- and Allah knew best what she brought forth(377)- "And no wise is the male Like the female(378). I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection from the Evil One, the Rejected."

377 The mother of Mary expected a male child. Was she disappointed that it was a female child? No, for she had faith, and she knew that Allah's Plan was better than any wishes of hers. Mary was no ordinary girl: only Allah knew what it was that her mother brought forth.

378 The female child could not be devoted to Temple service under the Mosaic law, as she intended. But she was marked out for a special destiny as a miracle-child, to be the mother of the miracle-child Jesus. She was content to seek Allah's protection for her against all evil. There is a certain sense of pride in the girl on the part of the mother.

37. Right graciously did her Lord accept her: He made her grow in purity and beauty: To the care of Zakariya was she assigned. Every time that he entered (Her) chamber to see her, He found her supplied with sustenance. He said: "O Mary! Whence (comes) this to you?" She said: "From Allah. for Allah Provides sustenance to whom He pleases without measure(379)."

379 Mary grew under Allah's special protection. Her sustenance, under which we may include both her physical needs and her spiritual food, came from Allah, and her growth was indeed a "goodly growth" which I have tried to express in the text by the words "purity and beauty". Some aprocryphal Christian writings say that she was brought up in the Temple so the age of twelve like a dove, and that she was fed by angels.

38. There did Zakariya pray to his Lord, saying: "O my Lord! Grant unto me from Thee a progeny that is pure: for Thou art He that heareth prayer(380)!

380 The birth of Mary, the mother of Jesus, of John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus, and of Jesus, the prophet of Israel, whom Israel rejected, occurred in that order chronologically, and are told in that order. They are all interconnected. Zakar i y a prayed for no ordinary son. He and his wife were past the age of parenthood. Seeing the growth of Mary, he prayed for some child from Allah,- "from Thee, a progeny that is pure". Perhaps he had adoption in his mind. Did he want to adopt Mary? To his surprise, he is given a son in the flesh, ushered in by a special Sign. (R).

39. While he was standing in prayer in the chamber, the angels called unto him: "(Allah) doth give thee glad tidings of Yahya, witnessing the truth of a Word from Allah(381), and (be besides) noble, chaste, and a prophet,- of the (goodly) company of the righteous."

381 Notice: "a Word from Allah", not "theWord of Allah", the epithet that mystical Christianity uses for Jesus. As stated in 3:59 below, Jesus was created by a miracle, by Allah's word "Be", and he was.

40. He said: "O my Lord! How shall I have son, seeing I am very old, and my wife is barren?" "Thus," was the answer, "Doth God accomplish what He willeth."

41. He said: "O my Lord! Give me a Sign!" "Thy Sign," was the answer, "Shall be that thou shalt speak to no man for three days but with signals. Then celebrate the praises of thy Lord again and again, and glorify Him in the evening and in the morning."

42. Behold! the angels said: "O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee- chosen thee above the women of all nations(382).

382 Mary, the mother of Jesus, was unique, in that she gave birth to a son by a special miracle, without the intervention of the customary physical means. This of course does not mean that she was more than human, any more than that her son was more than human. She had as much need to pray to Allah as anyone else. The Christian dogma, in all sects except the Unitarian, holds that Jesus was God and the son of God. The worship of Mary became the practice in the Roman Catholic Church, which calls Mary the "Mother of God". This seems to have been endorsed by the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.C., in the century before Muhammad was born to sweep away the corruptions of the Church of Christ . For ' alamin as meaning all nations, see 3:96, n. 423.

43. "O Mary! worship Thy Lord devoutly: Prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down."

44. This is part of the tidings of the things unseen(383), which We reveal unto thee (O Messenger.) by inspiration: Thou wast not with them when they cast lots with arrows(384), as to which of them should be charged with the care of Mary: Nor wast thou with them when they disputed (the point)(385).

383 *Things unseen:* belong to a realm beyond the reach of human perception and therefore it would be unseemly to dispute or speculate about them. (R).

384 Literally, *reeds: aqlam..* For the Arab custom of casting lots with arrows, see 2:219, n. 241.

385 Christian apocryphal writings mention the contention between the priests as to the honour of taking charge of Mary, and how it was decided by means of rods and reeds in favour of Zakariya.

45. Behold! the angels said: "O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus(386), the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah(387).

386 *Christ:* Greek, Christos = anointed: kings and priests were anointed to symbolise consecration to their office. The Hebrew and Arabic form is Masih .

387 Nearest to Allah: *Muqarrabin, Cf.* 56:11.

46. "He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity(388). And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous."

388 The ministry of Jesus lasted only about three years, from 30 to 33 years of his age, when in the eyes of his enemies he was crucified. But the Gospel of Luke (2:46) describes him as disputing with the doctors in the Temple at the age of 12, and even earlier, as a child, he was "strong in spirit, filled with wisdom" (Luke 2:40). Some apocryphal Gospels describe him as preaching from infancy.

47. She said: "O my Lord(389)! How shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?" He said: "Even so: Allah createth what He willeth: When He hath decreed a plan, He but saith to it, ´Be,´ and it is!

389 She was addressed by angels, who gave her Allah's message. In reply she speaks as to Allah. In reply, apparently an angel again gives Allah's message.

48. "And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel,

49. "And (appoint him) a messenger to the Children of Israel, (with this message): "´I have come to you, with a Sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's leave(390): And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by Allah.s leave; and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store(391) in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe;

390 This miracle of the clay birds is found in some of the apocryphal Gospels; those of curing the blind and the lepers and raising the dead are in the canonical Gospels. The original Gospel (see 3:48) was not the various stories written afterwards by disciples, but the real Message taught direct by Jesus.

391 I do not know whether this clause refers to a particular incident, or generally to a prophetic knowledge of what is not known to ordinary people.

50. "´(I have come to you), to attest the Law which was before me. And to make lawful to you part of what was (Before) forbidden to you; I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. So fear Allah, and obey me.

51. "´It is Allah Who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a Way that is straight.´"

52. When Jesus found Unbelief on their part He said: "Who will be My helpers to (the work of) Allah." Said the disciples: "We are Allah.s helpers: We believe in Allah, and do thou bear witness that we are Muslims(392).

392 (*Cf.* 5:11) The story of Jesus is told with special application to the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Note the word helpers (Ans a r) in this connection, and the reference to plotters in 3:54 . It was the one Religion-the Religion of Allah, which was in essence the religion of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. The argument runs: who do ye then now make divisions and reject the living Teacher? Islam is: bowing to the Will of Allah. All who have faith should bow to the Will of Allah and be Muslims.

53. "Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed, and we follow the Messenger. then write us down among those who bear witness."

54. And (the unbelievers) plotted and planned(393), and Allah too planned, and the best of planners is Allah.

393 The Arabic *makara* has both a bad and a good meaning, that of making an intricate plan to carry out some secret purpose. The enemies of Allah are constantly doing that. But Allah -- in whose hands is all good--has His plans also, against which the evil ones will have no chance whatever *(Cf.* 8:30, 13:42, and 27:50).

55. Behold! Allah said: "O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee(394) to Myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods)(395)of those who blaspheme; I will make those who follow thee superior(396) to those who reject faith, to the Day of Resurrection: Then shall ye all return unto me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein ye dispute(397).

394 Read this with 4:157-158, where it is said that "whereas they slew him not nor they crucified him but it was made dubious unto". The guilt of the Jews remained, but Jesus was eventually taken up to Allah.

395 Jesus was charged by the Jews with blasphemy as claiming to be God or the son of God. The Christians (except a few early sects which were annihilated by persecution, and the modern sect of Unitarians), adopted the substance of the claim, and made it the cornerstone of their faith. Allah clears Jesus of such a charge or claim.

396 Those *who follow thee* refer to both Muslims (insofar as they truly follow the basic teachings of Jesus) and Christians (who claim to follow him). [Eds.].

397 All the controversies about dogma and faith will disappear when we appear before Allah. He will judge not by what we profess but by what we are.

56. "As to those who reject faith, I will punish them with terrible agony in this world and in the Hereafter, nor will they have anyone to help."

57. "As to those who believe and work righteousness, Allah will pay them (in full) their reward; but Allah loveth not those who do wrong."

58. "This is what we rehearse unto thee of the Signs and the Message of Wisdom."

59. The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam(398); He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be". And he was.

398 After a description of the high position which Jesus occupies as a prophet, we have a repudiation of the dogma that he was Allah, or the son of Allah, or anything more than a man. If it is said that he was born without a human father, Adam was also so horn. Indeed Adam was horn without either a human father or mother. As far as our physical bodies are concerned they are mere dust. In Allah's sight Jesus was as dust just as Adam was or humanity is. The greatness of Jesus arose from the Divine command "Be": for after that he was — more than dust — a great spiritual leader and teacher.

60. The Truth (comes) from Allah alone; so be not of those who doubt(399).

399 The truth does not necessarily come from priests, or from the superstitions of whole peoples. It comes from Allah, and where there is a direct revelation, there is no room for doubt *(Cf.* 10:94).

61. If any one disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge Hath come to thee, say: "Come! let us gather together,- our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: Then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie!(400)"

400 In the year of Deputations, 10th of the Hijrah, came a Christian embassy from Najran (towards Yaman, about 150 miles north of San 1 a). They were much impressed on hearing this passage of the Qur'an explaining the true position of Christ, and they entered into tributary relations with the new Muslim State . But ingrained habits and customs prevented them from accepting Islam as a body. The Prophet, firm in his faith, proposed a *Mub a halah, i.e.,* a solemn meeting, in which both sides should summon not only their men, but their women and children, earnestly pray to Allah, and invoke the curse of Allah on those who should lie. Those who had a pure and sincere faith would not hesitate. The Christians declined, and they were dismissed in a spirit of tolerance with a promise of protection from the State in return for tribute, "the wages of rule," as it is called in the A*' ini Akbari* .

62. This is the true account(401): There is no god except Allah. and Allah.He is indeed the Exalted in Power, the Wise.

401 We are now in a position to deal with the questions which we left over at 2:87, Jesus is no more than a man. It is against reason and revelation to call him God or the son of God. He is called the son of Mary to emphasise this. He had no human father, as his birth was miraculous. But it was not this which raised him to his high spiritual position as a prophet, but because Allah called him to his office. The praise is due to Allah, Who by His word gave him spiritual strength — "strengthened him with the holy spirit." The miracles which surround his story relate not only to his birth and his life and death, but also to his mother Mary and his precursor Yahya. These were the "Clear Signs" which he brought. It was those who misunderstood him who obscured his clear Signs and surrounded him with mysteries of their own invention. (R).

63. But if they turn back, Allah hath full knowledge of those who do mischief.

64. Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah. that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah(402)." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah.s Will).

402 In the abstract the People of the Book would agree to all three propositions. In practice they fail. Apart from doctrinal lapses from the unity of the One True God, there is the question of a consecrated Priesthood (among the Jews it was hereditary also), as if a mere human being-Cohen, or Pope, or Priest, or Brahman-could claim superiority apart from his learning and the purity of his life, or could stand between man and Allah in some special sense. The same remarks apply to the worship of saints. They may be pure and holy, but no one can protect us or claim Lordship over us except Allah. For *Rabb,* see 1:2, n. 20. Abraham was a true man of God, but he could not be called a Jew or a Christian as he lived long before the Law of Moses or the Gospel of Jesus was revealed.

65. Ye People of the Book! Why dispute ye about Abraham, when the Law and the Gospel Were not revealed Till after him? Have ye no understanding?

66. Ah! Ye are those who fell to disputing (Even) in matters of which ye had some knowledge(403)! but why dispute ye in matters of which ye have no knowledge? It is Allah Who knows, and ye who know not!

403 The number of sects among the Jews and Christians shows that they wrangled and disputed even about some of the matters of their own religion, of which they should have had some knowledge. But when they talk of Father Abraham, they are entirely out of court, as he lived before their peculiar systems were evolved.

67. Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah.s (Which is Islam), and he joined not gods with Allah(404).

404 *Cf.* 2:135 and the whole argument in that passage.

68. Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham, are those who follow him, as are also this Messenger and those who believe: And Allah is the Protector of those who have faith.

69. It is the wish of a section of the People of the Book to lead you astray. But they shall lead astray (Not you), but themselves, and they do not perceive!

70. Ye People of the Book! Why reject ye the Signs of Allah, of which ye are (Yourselves) witnesses?

71. Ye People of the Book! Why do ye clothe Truth with falsehood, and conceal the Truth, while ye have knowledge(405)?

405 There are many ways of preventing the access of people to the truth. One is to tamper with it, or trick it out in colours of falsehood: half-truths are often more dangerous than obvious falsehoods. Another is to conceal it altogether. Those who are jealous of a prophet of Allah, whom they actually see before them, do not allow his credentials or virtues to be known, or vilify him, or conceal facts which would attract people to him. When people do this of set purpose, against their own light ("of which ye are yourselves witnesses"), they are descending to the lowest depths of degradation, and they are doing more harm to themselves than to anyone else. (R).

72. A section of the People of the Book say: "Believe in the morning(406) what is revealed to the believers, but reject it at the end of the day; perchance they may (themselves) Turn back;

406 *Wajh* here has the sense of "beginning", "early part". The cynics who plotted against Islam actually asked their accomplices to join the believers and then repudiate them.

73. "And believe no one unless he follows your religion." Say: "True guidance is the Guidance of Allah. (Fear ye) Lest a revelation(407) be sent to someone (else) Like unto that which was sent unto you? or that those (Receiving such revelation) should engage you in argument before your Lord(408)?" Say: "All bounties are in the hand of Allah. He granteth them to whom He pleaseth: And Allah careth for all, and He knoweth all things."

407 The two clauses following have been variously construed, and some translations leave the sense ambiguous. I have construed the conjunction *"an* to mean "lest", as it undoubtedly does in 7:172, *"an taqulu ",* etc.

408 *Cf.* 2:26; 2:76. The People of the Book were doubly annoyed at the Muslims: (1) that they should (being outside their ranks) receive Allah's revelations, and (2) that having received such revelations, they should be able to convict them out of their own scriptures before their Lord!

74. For His Mercy He specially chooseth whom He pleaseth; for Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded.

75. Among the People of the Book are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold(409), will (readily) pay it back; others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin(410), will not repay it unless thou constantly stoodest demanding, because, they say, "there is no call on us (to keep faith) with these ignorant (Pagans)(411)." but they tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it.

409 *Hoard of gold: qintar:* a talent of 1,200 ounces of gold. See 3:14 , n. 354. (R).

410 *Silver coin: dinar.* In the later Roman Empire , the denarius was a small silver coin. It must have been current in Syria and the markets of Arabia in the time of the Prophet. It was the coin whose name is translated in the English Bible by the word penny. Matt. 22:19 ; hence the abbreviation of a penny is *d(*= denarius). The later Arabian coin *dinar,* coined by the Umayyads, was a gold coin after the pattern of the Byzantine (Roman) *denarius aureus* and weighed about 66349 grains troy.

411 Every race imbued with race arrogance resorts to this kind of moral or religious subterfuge. Even if its members are usually honest or just among themselves, they are contemptuous of those outside their circle, and cheat and deceive them without any qualms of conscience. This is a "lie against Allah".

76. Nay.- Those that keep their plighted faith and act aright,-verily Allah loves those who act aright.

77. As for those who sell the faith they owe to Allah and their own plighted word for a small price(412), they shall have no portion in the Hereafter: Nor will Allah (Deign to) speak to them or look at them on the Day of Judgment, nor will He cleans them(413) (of sin): They shall have a grievous penalty.

412 All our duties to our fellow creatures are referred to the service and faith we owe to Allah. But in the matter of truth an appeal is made to our own self-respect as responsible beings: is it becoming that we should be false to our own word, to ourselves? And then we are reminded that the utmost we can gain by falsifying Allah's word or being untrue to ourselves is but a miserable price. We get at best something very paltry as the price for selling our very souls.

413 Even on sinners—ordinary sinners—Allah will look with compassion and mercy: He will speak words of kindness and cleanse them of their sins. But those who are in active rebellion against Allah and sin against their own light—what mercy can they expect?

78. There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues: (As they read) you would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, "That is from Allah," but it is not from Allah. It is they who tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it!

79. It is not (possible) that a man, to whom is given the Book, and Wisdom, and the prophetic office, should say to people: "Be ye my worshippers rather than Allah's(414)": on the contrary (He would say) "Be ye worshippers of Him Who is truly the Cherisher of all: For ye have taught the Book and ye have studied it earnestly."

414 It is not in reason or in the nature of things that Allah's messenger should preach against Allah. Jesus came to preach and convey the true message of Allah. (R).

80. Nor would he instruct you to take angels and prophets(415) for Lords and patrons. What! would he bid you to unbelief after ye have bowed your will (To Allah in Islam)?

415 Jesus was a prophet, and the Holy Spirit "with which he was strengthened" was the Angel who brought the revelations to him.

81. Behold! Allah took the covenant of the prophets(416), saying: "I give you a Book and Wisdom; then comes to you a messenger, confirming what is with you; do ye believe in him and render him help." Allah said: "Do ye agree, and take this my Covenant as binding on you?" They said: "We agree." He said: "Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses."

416 *Cf.* 2:63, n. 78, and 33:7. The argument is: You (People of the Book) are bound by your own oaths, sworn solemnly in the presence of your own Prophets. In the Old Testament as it now exists, Muhammad is foretold in Deut. 18:18; and the rise of the Arab nation in Isaiah 42:11, for Kedar was a son of Isma'il and the name is used for the Arab nation. Also, in the New Testament as it now exists, Muhammad is foretold in the Gospel of St. John, 14:16 , 15:26 , and 16:7; the *future* Comforter cannot be the "Holy Spirit" as understood by Christians, because the Holy Spirit already was present, helping and guiding Jesus. The Greek word translated "Comforter" is "Paracletos", which is an easy corruption from "Periclytos", which is almost a literal translation of "Muhammad" or "Ahmad"; see 7:157 and 61:6. Further, there were other Gospels that have perished, but of which traces still remain, which were even more specific in their reference to Muhammad; *e.g.,* the Gospel of St. Barnabas, of which an Italian translation is extant in the State Library at Vienna . It was edited in 1907 with an English translation by Mr. Lonsdale and Laura Ragg.

82. If any turn back after this, they are perverted transgressors.

83. Do they seek for other than the Religion of Allah.- while all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling(417), bowed to His Will (Accepted Islam), and to Him shall they all be brought back.

417 Allah's Truth is manifest, and all that is good and true and sane and normal accepts it with j oy. But even where there is "disease in the heart" (2:10), or judgement is obscured by perversity, every creature must eventually see and acknowledge Allah and His power (2:167), *Cf.* R. Bridges: "Testament of Beauty": 4:1419-22 -"For God's love is unescapable as nature's environment, which if a man ignore or think to thrust it off, he is the ill-natured fool that runneth blindly on death." All Nature adores Allah, and Islam asks for nothing peculiar or sectarian; it

but asks that we follow our nature and make our will conformable to Allah's Will as seen in Nature, history, and revelation. Its message is universal.

84. Say: "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma´il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam)."

85. If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah)(418), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good).

418 The Muslim position is clear. The Muslim does not claim to have a religion peculiar to himself. Islam is not a sect or an ethnic religion. In its view all Religion is one, for the Truth is one. It was the religion preached by all the earlier prophets. It was the truth taught by all the inspired Books. In essence it amounts to a consciousness of the Will and Plan of Allah and a joyful submission to that Will and Plan. If anyone wants a religion other than that, he is false to his own nature, as he is false to Allah's Will and Plan. Such a one cannot expect guidance, for he has deliberately renounced guidance.

86. How shall Allah Guide those who reject Faith after they accepted it and bore witness that the Messenger was true and that Clear Signs had come unto them? but Allah guides not a people unjust.

87. Of such the reward is that on them (rests) the curse of Allah, of His angels, and of all mankind;-

88. In that will they dwell; nor will their penalty be lightened, nor respite be their (lot)(418-A);

418-A Cf. 2:161-162.

89. Except for those that repent (Even) after that, and make amends; for verily Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

90. But those who reject Faith after they accepted it, and then go on adding to their defiance of Faith,- never will their repentance be accepted; for they are those who have (of set purpose) gone astray.

91. As to those who reject Faith, and die rejecting,- never would be accepted from any such as much gold as the earth contains, though they should offer it for ransom. For such is (in store) a penalty grievous, and they will find no helpers.

92. By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that(419) which ye love; and whatever ye give, of a truth Allah knoweth it well.

419 The test of charity is: do you give something that you value greatly, something that you love? If you give your life in a Cause, that is the greatest gift you can give. If you give yourself, that is, your personal efforts, your talents, your skill, your learning, that comes next in degree. If you give your earnings, your property, your possessions, that is also a great gift; for many people love them even more than other things. And there are less tangible things, such as position, reputation, the well-being of those we love, the regard of those who can help us, etc. It is unselfishness that Allah demands, and there is no act of unselfishness, however small or intangible, but is well within the knowledge of Allah.

93. All food was lawful to the Children of Israel, except what Israel(420) Made unlawful for itself, before the Law (of Moses) was revealed. Say: "Bring ye the Law and study it, if ye be men of truth."

420 The Arabs ate the flesh of the camel, which is lawful in Islam, but it was prohibited by the Jewish Law of Moses (Leviticus 11:4). But that Law was very strict because of the "hardness of heart" of Israel , because of Israel 's insolence and iniquity (6:146). Before it was promulgated Israel was free to choose its own food. I take " Israel" here to stand for the people of Israel .

94. If any, after this, invent a lie and attribute it to Allah, they are indeed unjust wrong-doers.

95. Say: "(Allah) speaketh the Truth: follow the religion of Abraham, the sane in faith; he was not of the Pagans(421)."

421 The greater freedom of Islam in the matter of the ceremonial law, compared with the Mosaic Law, is not a reproach but a recommendation. We go back to an older source than Judaism-the institutions of Abraham. By common consent his Faith was sound, and he was certainly not a pagan, a term contemptuously applied to the Arabs by the Jews.

96. The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakkah(422): Full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings(423):

422 *Bakkah:* same as Makkah; perhaps an older name. The foundation of the Ka'bah goes back to Abraham, but there are place associations in the sacred territory with the names of Adam and Eve. (R).

423 *'Ala-min:* all the worlds (1:2, n. 20), all kinds of beings; all nations (3:42); all creatures (3:97).

97. In it are Signs Manifest; (for example), the Station of Abraham(424); whoever enters it attains security(425); Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah,- those who can afford the journey; but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of His creatures.

424 *Station of Abraham:* see 2:125 and n. 125.

425 See reference in last note.

98. Say: "O People of the Book! Why reject ye the Signs of Allah, when Allah is Himself witness to all ye do?"

99. Say: "O ye People of the Book! Why obstruct ye those who believe, from the path of Allah, Seeking to make it crooked, while ye were yourselves witnesses (to Allah.s Covenant)(426)? but Allah is not unmindful of all that ye do."

426 *Cf.* 3:81.

100. O ye who believe! If ye listen to a faction among the People of the Book, they would (indeed) render you apostates after ye have believed!

101. And how would ye deny Faith while unto you are rehearsed the Signs of Allah, and among you Lives the Messenger. Whoever holds firmly to Allah will be shown a way that is straight.

102. O ye who believe! Fear Allah as He should be(427) feared, and die not except in a state(428) of Islam.

427 Fear is of many kinds: (1) the abject fear of the coward; (2) the fear of a child or an inexperienced person in the face of an unknown danger; (3) the fear of a reasonable man who wishes to avoid harm to himself or to people whom he wishes to protect; (4) the reverence which is akin to love, for it fears to do anything which is not pleasing to the object of love. The first is unworthy of man; the second is necessary for one spiritually immature; the third is a manly precaudon against evil as long as it is unconquered; and the fourth is the seed-bed of righteousness. Those mature in faith cultivate the fourth; at earlier stages, the third or the second may be necessary; they are fears, but not the fear of Allah. The first is a feeling of which anyone should be ashmed.

428 Our whole being should be permeated with Islam; it is not a mere veneer or outward show.

103. And hold fast, all together, by the rope(429) which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah.s favour on you; for ye were enemies(430) and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make His Signs clear to you: That ye may be guided.

429 The simile is that of people struggling in deep water, to whom a benevolent Providence stretches out a strong and unbreakable rope of rescue. If all hold fast to it together, their mutual support adds to the chance of their safety.

430 Yathrib was torn with civil and tribal feuds and dissensions before the Messenger of Allah set his sacred feet on its soil. After that, it became the City of the Prophet, Madinah, and unmatched Brotherhood and the pivot of Islam. This poor quarrelsome world is a larger Yathrib: can we establish the sacred feet on its soil, and make it a new and larger Madinah?

104. Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity(431).

431 Muflih, *aflaha, fal a h:* the root idea is attainment of desires; happiness, in this world and the next; success; prosperity; freedom from anxiety, care, or a disturbed state of mind-the opposite *of 'adhab in* the next verse, which includes: failure; misery; punishment or penalty; agony or anguish.

The ideal Muslim community is happy, untroubled by conflicts or doubts, sure of itself, strong, united, and prosperous; because it invites to all that is good, enjoins the right; and forbids the wrong -a master-stroke of description in three clauses.

105. Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving Clear Signs: For them is a dreadful penalty-

106. On the Day when some faces will be (lit up with) white, and some faces will be (in the gloom of) black(432): To those whose faces will be black, (will be said): "Did ye reject Faith after accepting it? Taste then the penalty for rejecting Faith."

432 The "face" *(wajh)* expresses our personality, our inmost being. White is the colour of Light; to become white is to be illumined with Light, which stands for felicity, the rays of the glorious Light of Allah. Black is the colour of darkness, sin, rebellion, misery; removal from the Grace and Light of Allah. These are the Signs of Heaven and Hell. The standard of decision in all questions is the justice of Allah.

107. But those whose faces will be (lit with) white,- they will be in (the light of) Allah.s mercy: therein to dwell (for ever).

108. These are the Signs of Allah. We rehearse them to thee in Truth: And Allah means no injustice to any of His creatures.

109. To Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: To Him do all questions go back (for decision)(433).

433 *Cf.* 2:210.

110. Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.(434) If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors.

434 The logical conclusion to the evolution of religious history is a non-sectarian, non-racial, non-doctrinal, universal religion, which Islam claims to be. For Islam is just submission to the Will of Allah. This implies (1) Faith, (2) doing right, being an example to others to do right, and having the power to see that the right prevails, (3) eschewing wrong, being an example to others to eschew wrong, and having the power to see that wrong and injustice are defeated. Islam therefore lives, not for itself, but for mankind. The People of the Book, if only they had faith, would be Muslims, for they have been prepared for Islam. Unfortunately there is Unfaith, but it can never harm those who carry the banner of Faith and Right, which must always be victorious.

111. They will do you no harm, barring a trifling annoyance; if they come out to fight you, they will show you their backs, and no help shall they get.

112. Shame is pitched over them(435) (Like a tent) wherever they are found, except when under a covenant (of protection) from Allah and from men; they draw on themselves wrath from Allah, and pitched over them is (the tent of) destitution. This because they rejected the Signs of Allah, and slew the prophets in defiance of right(436); this because they rebelled and transgressed beyond bounds.

435 *Duribat;* I think there is a simile from the pitching of a tent. Ordinarily a man's tent is a place of tranquillity and honour for him. The tent of the wicked wherever they are found is ignominy, shame, and humiliation. It is pity from Allah or from men that gives them protection when their pride has a fall. Using the same simile of a tent in another way, their home will be destitution and misery.

436 *Cf*. 3:21. n. 363.

113. Not all of them are alike: Of the People of the Book are a portion that stand (For the right): They rehearse the Signs of Allah all night long, and they prostrate themselves(437) in adoration.

437 In Islam we respect sincere faith and true righteousness in whatever form they appear. This verse, according to Commentators, refers to those People of the Book who eventually embraced Islam. (R).

114. They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works: They are in the ranks of the righteous.

115. Of the good that they do, nothing will be rejected of them; for Allah knoweth well those that do right.

116. Those who reject Faith,- neither their possessions nor their (numerous) progeny will avail them aught against Allah. They will be companions of the Fire,- dwelling therein (forever).(438)

438 *Cf.* 3:10 .

117. What they spend in the life of this (material) world May be likened to a wind which brings a nipping frost: It strikes and destroys the harvest of men who have wronged their own souls: it is not Allah that hath wronged them, but they wrong themselves.(439)

439 False "spending" may be either in false "charity" or in having a "good time". For the man who resists Allah's purpose, neither of them is any good. The essence of charity is faith and love. Where these are wanting, charity is not charity. Some baser motive is there: ostentation, or even worse, getting a person into the giver's power by a pretence of charity: something that is connected with the life of this grasping, material world. What happens? You expect a good harvest. But "while you think, good easy man, for surely your greatness is a-ripening," there comes a nipping frost, and destroys all your hopes. The frost is some calamity, or the fact that you are found out! Or perhaps it is "High blown pride," as in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII,* 2:3. In your despair you may blame blind Fate or you may blame Allah! Blind Fate does not exist, for there is Allah's Providence , which is just and good. The harm or injustice has come, not from Allah, but from your own soul. You wronged your soul, and it suffered the frost. Your base motive brought you no good: it may have reduced you to poverty, shame, and disgrace. All the brave show of the wicked in this life is but a wind charged with evil to themselves.

118. O ye who believe! Take not into your intimacy those outside your ranks: They will not fail to corrupt you. They only desire your ruin: Rank hatred has already

appeared from their mouths: What their hearts conceal is far worse. We have made plain to you the Signs, if ye have wisdom.

119. **Ah! ye are those who love them, but they love you not,- though ye believe in the whole of the Book(440). When they meet you, they say, "We believe":(441) But when they are alone, they bite off the very tips of their fingers at you in their rage. Say: "Perish in you rage; Allah knoweth well all the secrets of the heart."**

440 Islam gives you the complete revelation, "the whole of the Book," though partial revelations have come in all ages. *(Cf.* 3:23 , and n. 366.)

441 *Cf.* 2:14 .

120. **If aught that is good befalls you, it grieves them; but if some misfortune overtakes you, they rejoice at it. But if ye are constant and do right, not the least harm will their cunning do to you; for Allah Compasseth round about all that they do.**

121. **Remember that morning Thou didst leave Thy household (early) to post the faithful at their stations for battle:(442) And Allah heareth and knoweth all things:**

442 The Battle of Uhud was a great testing time for the young Muslim community. Their mettle and the wisdom and strength of their Leader were shown in the battle of Badr (3:13 and note), in which the Makkan Pagans suffered a crushing defeat. The Makkans were determined to wipe off their disgrace and to annihilate the Muslims in Madinah. To this end they collected a large force and marched to Madinah. They numbered some 3,000 fighting men under Abu Sufyan , and they were so confident of victory that their women-folk came with them, and showed the most shameful savagery after the batde. To meet the threatened danger the Muslim Leader, Muhammad Mustafa , with his usual foresight, courage, and initiative, resolved to take his station at the foot of Mount Uhud , which dominates the city of Madinah some three miles to the north. Early in the morning, on the 7th of Shawwal, A.H. 3 (January, 625), he made his dispositions for battle. Madinah winters are notoriously rigorous, but the warriors of Islam (700 to 1000 in number) were up early. A torrent bed was to their south, and the passes in the hills at their back were filled with 50 archers to prevent the enemy attack from the rear. The enemy were set the task of attacking the walls of Madinah, with the Muslims at their rear. In the beginning the battle went well for the Muslims. The enemy wavered, but the Muslim archers, in disobedience of their orders, left their posts to join in the pursuit and share in the booty. There was also treachery on the part of the 300 "Hypocrites" led by Abdullah ibn Ubai, who deserted. The enemy took advantage of the opening left by the archers, and there was severe hand-to-hand fighting, in which numbers told in favour of the enemy. Many of the Companions and Helpers were killed. But there was no rout. Among the Muslim martyrs was the gallant Hamza, a brother of the Prophet's father. The graves of the martyrs are still shown at Uhud. The Messenger himself was wounded in his head and face, and one of his front teeth was broken. Had it not been for his firmness, courage, and coolness, all would have been lost. As **it** was, the Prophet, in spite of his wound, and many of the wounded Muslims, inspired by his example, returned to the field next day, and Abu Sufyan and his Makkah army thought it most prudent to withdraw, Madinah was saved, but a lesson in faith, constancy, firmness, and steadfastness was learnt by the Muslims. (R).

122. **Remember two of your parties(443) Meditated cowardice; but Allah was their protector, and in Allah should the faithful (Ever) put their trust.**

443 The two parties wavering in their minds were probably Banu Salamah of the Khazraj and Banu Harithah, but they rallied under the Prophet's inspiration. That incident shows that man may be weak, but if he allows his weak will, to be governed by the example of men of God, he may yet remedy his weakness. (Eds.).

123. **Allah had helped you at Badr, when ye were a contemptible little force; then fear Allah. thus May ye show your gratitude.(444)**

444 Gratitude to Allah is not to be measured by words. It should show itself in conduct and life. If all the Muslims had learnt the true lesson from the victory at Badr, their archers would not have left the posts appointed for them, nor the two tribes mentioned in the last note ever wavered in their faith.

124. **Remember thou saidst to the Faithful: "Is it not enough for you that Allah should help you with three thousand angels (Specially) sent down?(445)**

445 Read verse 124 with the following five verses, to get its full signification *(Cf.* 8:9).

125. **"Yea, - if ye remain firm, and act aright, even if the enemy should rush here on you in hot haste, your Lord would help you with five thousand angels Making a terrific onslaught.(446)**

446 *Musawwim:* this is the active voice of the verb, not to be confused with the passive voice in 3:14 , which has a different signification.

126. **Allah made it but a message of hope for you, and an assurance to your hearts: (in any case) there is no help except from Allah. The Exalted, the Wise:(447)**

447 Whatever happens, whether there is a miracle or not, all help proceeds from Allah. Man should not be so arrogant as to suppose that his own resources will change the current of the world plan. Allah helps those who show constancy, courage, and discipline, and use all the human means at their disposal, not those who fold their hands and have no faith. But Allah's help is determined on considerations exalted far above our petty human motive, and by perfect wisdoms, of which we can have only faint glimpses.

127. **That He might cut off a fringe of the Unbelievers(448) or expose them to infamy, and they should then be turned back, frustrated of their purpose.**

448 *A fringe of the Unbelievers:* an extremity, an end, either upper or lower. Here it may mean that the chiefs of the Makkan Pagans, who had come to exterminate the Muslims with such confidence, went back frustrated in their purpose. The shameless cruelty with which they and their women mutilated the Muslim corpses on the battlefield will stand recorded to their eternal infamy. Perhaps it also exposed their real nature to some of those who fought for them, *e.g.,* Khalid ibn al Walid, who not only accepted Islam afterwards, but became one of the most notable champions of Islam. He was with the Muslims in the conquest of Makkah, and later on, won distinguished honours in Syria and Iraq .

128. **Not for thee, (but for Allah., is the decision: Whether He turn in mercy to them, or punish them; for they are indeed wrong-doers.(449)**

449 Uhud is as much a signpost for Islam as Badr. For us in these latter days it carries an ever greater lesson. Allah's help will come if we have faith, obedience, discipline, unity, and the spirit of acting in righteousness and justice. If we fail, His mercy is always open to us. But it is also open to our enemies, and those who seem to us His enemies. His Plan may be to bring sinners to repentance, and to teach us righteousness and wisdom through those who seem in our eyes to be rebellious or even defiant. There may be good in them that He sees and we do not- a humbling thought that must lead to our own self-examination and self-improvement.

129. **To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth. He forgiveth whom He pleaseth and punisheth whom He pleaseth; but Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.**

130. **O ye who believe! Devour not usury,(450) doubled and multiplied; but fear Allah. that ye may (really) prosper.(451)**

450 *Cf.* 2:275 and note. The last verse spoke of forgiveness, even to enemies. If such mercy is granted by Allah to erring sinners, how much more is it incumbent on us, poor sinners to refrain from oppressing our fellow-beings in need, in matters of mere material and ephemeral wealth? Usury is the opposite extreme of charity, unselfishness, striving, and giving of ourselves in the service of Allah and of our fellow-men.

451 Real prosperity consists, not in greed, but in giving - the giving of ourselves and of our substance in the cause of Allah and Allah's truth and in the service of Allah's creatures.

131. **Fear the Fire, which is repaired for those who reject Faith:**

132. And obey Allah and the Messenger. that ye may obtain mercy.

133. Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth,(452) prepared for the righteous,-

452 The Fire (3:131) is, as always, contrasted with the Garden -in other words, Hell contrasted with Heaven. We are told that its width alone is that of the whole of the heavens and the earth - all the creation we can imagine. In other words our spiritual felicity covers not merely this or that part of our being, but all life and all existence. Who can measure its width, or length, or depth? (R).

134. Those who spend (freely),(453) whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men;- for Allah loves those who do good;-

453 Another definition of the righteous *(vv.* 134-35). So far from grasping material wealth, they give freely, of themselves and their substance, not only when they are well-off and it is easy for them to do so, but also when they are in difficulties, for other people may be in difficulties at the same time. They do not get ruffled in adversity, or get angry when the other people behave badly, or their own good plans fail. On the contrary they redouble their efforts. For the charity- or good deed - is all the more necessary in adversity. And they do not throw the blame on others. Even where such blame is due and correction is necessary, their own mind is free from a sense of grievance, for they forgive and cover other men's faults. This as far as other people are concerned. But we may be ourselves at fault, and perhaps we brought some calamity on ourselves, The righteous man is not necessarily perfect. In such circumstances his behaviour is described in the next verse.

135. And those who,(454) having done something to be ashamed of, or wronged their own souls,(455) earnestly bring Allah to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins,- and who can forgive sins except Allah.- and are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done.

454 The righteous man, when he finds he has fallen into sin or error, does not whine or despair, but asks for Allah's forgiveness, and his faith gives him hope. If he is sincere, that means that he abandons his wrong conduct and makes amends.

455 Sin is a sort of oppression of ourselves by ourselves. This follows from the doctrine of personal responsibility, as opposed to that of blind fate or of an angry God or gods lying in wait for revenge or injury on mankind.

136. For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens with rivers flowing underneath,- an eternal dwelling: How excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)!

137. Many were the Ways of Life(456) that have passed away before you: travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth.

456 *Cf.* Tennyson (In Memoriam): "Our little systems have their day. They have their day and cease to be: They are but broken lights of Thee, And Thou, O Lord! art more than they." Only Allah's Truth will last, and it will gain the mastery in the end. If there is defeat, we must not be dejected, lose heart, or give up the struggle. Faith means hope, activity, striving steadfastly on to the goal.

138. Here is a plain statement to men, a guidance and instruction to those who fear Allah.

139. So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: For ye must gain mastery if ye are true in Faith.

140. If a wound hath touched you,(457) be sure a similar wound hath touched the others. Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to men and men by turns: that Allah may know those that believe, and that He may take to Himself from your ranks Martyr-witnesses (to Truth). And Allah loveth not those that do wrong.

457 These general considerations apply in particular to the disaster in Uhud. (1) In a fight for truth, if you are hurt, be sure the adversary has suffered hurt also, the more so as he has no faith to sustain him. (2) Success or failure in this world comes to all at varying times: we must not grumble, as we do not see the whole of Allah's Plan. (3) Men's true mettle is known in adversity as gold is assayed in fire: *Cf.* also 3:154, n. 467. (4) Martyrdom is in itself an honour and a privilege; how glorious is the fame of Hamzah the Martyr? (5) If there is any dross in us, it will be purified by resistance and struggle. (6) When evil is given rope a little, it works out its own destruction: the orgies of cruelty indulged in by the Pagans after what they supposed to be their victory at Uhud filled up their cup of iniquity; it lost them the support and adherence of the best in their own ranks, and hastened the destruction of Paganism from Arabia, *Cf.* 3:127 and n. 448.

141. Allah.s object also is to purge(458) those that are true in Faith and to deprive of blessing Those that resist Faith.

458 The purge or purification was in two senses. (1) It cleared out the Hypocrites from the ranks of the Muslim warriors. (2) The testing-time strengthened the faith of the weak and wavering: for suffering has its own mission in life. The Prophet's example-wounded but staunch, and firmer than ever-put new life into the Community.

142. Did ye think that ye would enter Heaven(459) without Allah testing those of you who fought hard (In His Cause) and remained steadfast?

459 *Cf.* 2:214.

143. Ye did indeed wish for death before ye met him: Now ye have seen him with your own eyes, (And ye flinch!)

144. Muhammad is no more(460) than a messenger: many Were the messenger that passed away before him. If he died or were slain, will ye then Turn back on your heels? If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah. but Allah (on the other hand) will swiftly reward those who (serve Him) with gratitude.

460 This verse primarily applies to the battle of Uhud, in the course of which a cry was raised that the Messenger was slain. He had indeed been severely wounded, but Talhah, Abu Bakr, and 'AIi were at his side, and his own unexampled bravery saved the Muslim army from a rout. This verse was recalled again by Abu Bakr when the Messenger actually died a natural death eight years later, to remind people that Allah, Whose Message he brought, lives forever. And we have need to remember this now and often for two reasons: (1) when we feel inclined to pay more than human honour to one who was the truest, the purest, and the greatest of men, and thus in a sense to compound for our forgetting the spirit of his teaching, and (2) when we feel depressed at the chances and changes of time, and forget that the eternal Allah lives and watches over us and over all His creatures now as in all history in the past and in the future.

145. Nor can a soul die except by Allah.s leave, the term being fixed as by writing. If any do desire a reward in this life, We shall give it(461) to him; and if any do desire a reward in the Hereafter, We shall give it to him. And swiftly shall We reward those that (serve us with) gratitude.

461 There is a slight touch of irony in this. As applied to the archers at Uhud, who deserted their post for the sake of plunder, they might have got some plunder, but they put themselves and the whole of their army into jeopardy. For a little worldly gain, they nearly lost their souls. On the other hand, those who took the long view and fought with staunchness and discipline - their reward was swift and sure. If they died, they got the crown of martyrdom. If they lived, they were heroes honoured in this life and the next.

146. How many of the prophets fought (in Allah.s way), and with them (fought) Large bands of godly men? but they never lost heart if they met with disaster in Allah.s way, nor did they weaken (in will) nor give in. And Allah Loves those who are firm and steadfast.

147. All that they said was: "Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and anything We may have done that transgressed

our duty: Establish our feet firmly, and help us against those that resist Faith."

148. **And Allah gave them a reward in this world, and the excellent reward of the Hereafter. For Allah Loveth those who do good.**

149. **O ye who believe! If ye obey the Unbelievers, they will drive you back on your heels, and ye will turn back (from Faith) to your own loss.**

150. **Nay, Allah is your protector, and He is the best of helpers.**

151. **Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers, for that they joined companions with Allah, for which He had sent no authority: their abode will be the Fire: And evil is the home of the wrong-doers!**

152. **Allah did indeed fulfil His promise to you when ye with His permission Were about to annihilate your enemy,-until ye flinched and fell to disputing about the order,(462) and disobeyed it after He brought you in sight (of the booty) which ye covet. Among you are some that hanker after this world and some that desire the Hereafter. Then did He divert you from your foes in order to test you.(463) But He forgave you: For Allah is full of grace to those who believe.**

462 The order was: not to run after booty, but strictly to maintain discipline. Uhud was in the beginning a victory for the Muslims. Many of the enemy were slain, and they were retiring when a part of the Muslims, against orders, ran in pursuit, attracted by the prospects of booty. See note to 3:121-

463 The disobedience seemed at first pleasant: they were chasing the enemy, and there was the prospect of booty. But when the gap was noticed by the enemy, they turned the flank round the hill and, nearly overwhelmed the Muslims. Had it not been for Allah's grace, and the firmness of their Leader and his immediate Companions, they would have been finished.

153. **Behold! ye were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side glance at any one, and the Messenger in your rear was calling you back. There did Allah give you one distress after another by way of requital,(464) to teach you not to grieve for (the booty) that had escaped you and for (the ill) that had befallen you. For Allah is well aware of all that ye do.**

464 It would seem that a party of horsemen led by the dashing Khalid ibn al Wai id came through the gap in the passes where the Muslim archers should have been, and in the confusion that arose, the retreating foe rallied and turned back on the Muslims. From the low ground on the bank of the Nullah, the Muslims retreated in their turn and tried to gain the hill. They had a double loss: (1) they were baulked of the booty they had run after, and (2) their own lives and the lives of their whole army were in danger, and many lives were actually lost from their ranks. Their own lives being in danger, they had hardly time to grieve for the loss of booty or the general calamity. But it steadied them, and some of them stood the test.

154. **After (the excitement) of the distress, He sent down calm on a band of you overcome with slumber,(465) while another band was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings, Moved by wrong suspicions of Allah.suspicions due to ignorance. They said: "What affair is this of ours?"(466) Say thou: "Indeed, this affair is wholly Allah.s." They hide in their minds what they dare not reveal to thee. They say (to themselves): "If we had had anything to do with this affair, We should not have been in the slaughter here." Say: "Even if you had remained in your homes, those for whom death was decreed would certainly have gone forth to the place of their death"; but (all this was)(467) that Allah might test what is in your breasts and purge what is in your hearts. For Allah knoweth well the secrets of your hearts.**

465 After the first surprise, when the enemy turned on them, a great part of the Muslims did their best, and seeing their mettle, the enemy withdrew to his camp. There was a lull; the wounded had rest; those who had fought the hard fight were visited by kindly Sleep, sweet Nature's nurse. In contrast to them was the band of hypocrites, whose behaviour is described in the next note.

466 The hypocrites withdrew from the fighting. Apparently they had been among those who had been counselling the defence of Madinah within the walls instead of boldly coming out to meet the enemy. Their distress was caused by their own mental state: the sleep of the just was denied them; and they continued to murmur of what might have been. Only fools do so: wise men face actualities.

467 That testing by Allah is not in order that it may add to His knowledge, for He knows all. It is in order to help us subjectively, to mould our will, and purge us of any grosser motives, that will be searched out by calamity. If it is a hardened sinner, the test brings conviction out of his own self *Cf.* also 3:140, and 34:21.

155. **Those of you(468) who turned back on the day the two hosts Met,-it was Satan who caused them to fail, because of some (evil) they had done. But Allah Has blotted out (their fault): For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.**

468 It was the duty of all who were able to fight, to fight in the sacred cause at Uhud. But a small section were timid; they were not quite as bad as those who railed against Allah, or those who thoughtlessly disobeyed orders. But they still failed in their duty. It is our inner motives that Allah regards. These timorous people were forgiven by Allah. Perhaps they were given another chance: perhaps they rose to it and did their duty then.

156. **O ye who believe! Be not like the Unbelievers, who say of their brethren, when they are travelling through the Earth or engaged in fighting: "If they had stayed with us, they would not have died, or been slain." This that Allah may make it a cause of sighs and regrets in their hearts. It is Allah that gives Life and Death,(469) and Allah sees well all that ye do.**

469 It is want of faith that makes people afraid (1) of meeting death, (2) of doing their duty when it involves danger, as in travelling in order to earn an honest living, or fighting in a sacred cause. Such fear is part of the punishment for want of faith. If you have faith, there is no fear in meeting death, for it brings you nearer to your goal, nor in meeting danger for a sufficient cause, because you know that the keys of life and death are in Allah's hands. Nothing can happen without Allah's Will. If it is Allah's Will that you should die, your staying at home will not save you. If it is His Will that you should live, the danger you incur in a just cause brings you glory. Supposing it is His Will that you should lose your life in the danger, there are three considerations that would make you eager to meet it: (1) dying in doing your duty is the best means of reaching Allah's Mercy; (2) the man of faith knows that he is not going to an unknown country of which he has no news; he is going nearer to Allah; and (3) he is being "brought together" unto Allah: *i.e.,* he will meet all his dear ones in faith: instead of the separation which the souls without faith fear, he looks forward to a surer reunion than is possible in this life *(Cf.* 2:167).

157. **And if ye are slain, or die, in the way of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than all they could amass.(470)**

470 Notice a beautiful little literary touch here. At first sight you would expect the second person here *("you* could amass"), to match the second person in the earlier clause. But remember that the second person in the earlier clause refers to the man of faith, and the third person in the last line refers to the Unbelievers; as if it said: "Of course you as a man of faith would not be for hoarding riches: your wealth-duty and the mercy of Allah-is far more precious than anything the Unbelievers can amass in their selfish lives."

158. **And if ye die, or are slain, Lo! it is unto Allah that ye are brought together.**

159. **It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them(471) Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: so pass over (Their faults), and ask for ((Allah)´s) forgiveness for them; and consult them in**

affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast Taken a decision put thy trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him).

471 The extremely gentle nature of Muhammad endeared him to all, and it is reckoned as one of the Mercies of Allah. One of the Prophet's titles is "A Mercy to all Creation." At no time was this gentleness, this mercy, this long-suffering with human weaknesses, more valuable than after a disaster like that at Uhud. It is a God-like quality, which then, as always, bound and binds the souls of countless men to him.

160. If Allah helps you, none can overcome you: If He forsakes you, who is there, after that, that can help you? in Allah, then, Let believers put their trust.

161. No prophet could (ever)(472) be false to his trust. If any person is so false, He shall, on the Day of Judgment, restore what he misappropriated; then shall every soul receive its due,- whatever it earned,- and none shall be dealt with unjustly.

472 Besides the gentleness of his nature, Al Mustafa was known from his earliest life for his trustworthiness. Hence his title of *al Amin.* Unscrupulous people often read their own low motives into other men, and their accusation, which is meant to injure, fastens on the various virtues for which the man they attack is well known. Some of the hypocrites after Uhud raised some doubts about the division of the spoils, thinking to sow the seeds of poison in the hearts of the men who had deserted their posts in their craving for booty. Those low suspicions were never believed in by any sensible people, and they have no interest for us now. But the general principles here declared are of eternal value, (1) Prophets of Allah do not act from unworthy motives. (2) Those who act from such motives are spiritually the lowest of creatures, and they will make no profit. (3) A Prophet of Allah is not to be judged by the same standard as a greedy creature. (4) In Allah's eyes there are various grades of men, and we must try to understand and appreciate such grades. If we trust our Leader, we shall not question his honesty without cause. If he is dishonest, he is not fit to be a leader. (R).

162. Is the man who follows the good pleasure of Allah Like the man who draws on himself the wrath of Allah, and whose abode is in Hell?- A woeful refuge!

163. They are in varying gardens in the sight of Allah, and Allah sees well all that they do.

164. Allah did confer a great favour on the believers(473) when He sent among them a messenger from among themselves, rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom, while, before that, they had been in manifest error.

473 *Cf.* 2:151.

165. What! When a single disaster smites you, although ye smote (your enemies) with one twice as great, do ye say?- "Whence is this?" Say (to them): "It is from yourselves: For Allah hath power over all things."(474)

474 If Uhud was a reverse to the Muslims, they had inflicted a reverse twice as great on the Makkans at Badr. This reverse was not without Allah's permission, for He wanted to test and purify the faith of those who followed Islam, and to show them that they must strive and do all in their power to deserve Allah's help. If they disobeyed orders and neglected discipline, they must attribute the disaster to themselves and not to Allah.

166. What ye suffered on the day the two armies Met, was with the leave of Allah, in order that He might test(475) the believers,-

475 *Test:* literally *know.* See n. 467 to 3:154.

167. And the Hypocrites also.(476) These were told: "Come, fight in the way of Allah, or (at least) drive (The foe from your city)." They said: "Had we known how to fight, we should certainly have followed you." They were that day nearer to Unbelief than to Faith, saying with their lips what was not in their hearts but Allah hath full knowledge of all they conceal.

476 The testing of the hypocrites was the searching out. of their motives and exposing them to the sight of their brethren, who might otherwise have been taken in. In the first place they gave counsels of caution: in their minds it was nothing but cowardice. In the second place, what they wished was not the good of the community but its being placed in a contemptible position. When the others were for self-sacrifice, they were for ease and fair words. Pretending to be Muslims, they were nearer to unbelief. Ironically they pretended to know nothing of fighting, and left their devout brethren to defend their faith and ideas. If that devout spirit did not appeal to them, they might at least have defended their city of Madinah when it was threatened-defended their hearths and homes as good citizens.

168. (They are) the ones that say, (of their brethren slain), while they themselves sit (at ease): "If only they had listened to us they would not have been slain." Say: "Avert death from your own selves, if ye speak the truth."

169. Think not of those who are slain in Allah.s way as dead. Nay, they live(477), finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord;

477 A beautiful passage about the Martyrs in the cause of Truth. They are not dead; they live —and in a far higher and deeper sense than in the fife they have left. Even those who have no faith in the Hereafter honour those that die in their cause, with the crown of immortality in the minds and memories of generations unborn. But in Faith we see a higher, truer, and less relative immortality. Perhaps "immortality" is not the right word in this connection, as it implies a continuation of this life. In their case, through the gateway of death, they enter, the true real Life, as opposed to its shadow here. Our carnal life is sustained with carnal food, and its joys and pleasures at their best are those which are projected on the screen of this material world. Their real Life is sustained from the ineffable Presence and Nearness of Allah. *Cf.* 2:154, and see how the idea is further developed here.

170. They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah. And with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss), the (Martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve.(478)

478 The Martyrs not only rejoice at the bliss they have themselves attained. The dear ones left behind are in their thoughts: it is part of their glory that they have saved their dear ones from fear, sorrow, humiliation, and grief, in this life, even before they come to share in the glories of the Hereafter.

Note how the refrain: "on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve": conies in here with a new and appropriate meaning. Besides other things, it means that the dear ones have no cause to grieve at the death of the Martyrs; rather have they cause to rejoice.

171. They glory in the Grace and the bounty from Allah, and in the fact that Allah suffereth not the reward of the Faithful to be lost (in the least).

172. Of those who answered the call of Allah and the Messenger, even after being wounded,(479) those who do right and refrain from wrong have a great reward;-

479 After the confusion at Uhud, men rallied round the Prophet. He was wounded, and they were wounded, but they were all ready to fight again. Abu Sufyan with his Makkans withdrew, but left a challenge with them to meet him and his army again at the fair of Badr al Sughra next year. The challenge was accepted, and a picked band of Muslims under their intrepid Leader kept the tryst, but the enemy did not come. They returned, not only unharmed, but enriched by the trade at the fair, and (it may be presumed) strengthened by the accession of new adherents to their cause.

173. Men said to them: "A great army is gathering against you": And frightened them: But it (only) increased their Faith: They said: "For us Allah sufficeth, and He is the best disposer of affairs."

174. And they returned with Grace and bounty from Allah. no harm ever touched them: For they followed the good pleasure of Allah. And Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded.

175. It is only the Evil One that suggests to you the fear of his votaries: Be ye not afraid of them, but fear Me, if ye have Faith.

176. Let not those grieve thee who rush headlong into Unbelief: Not the least harm will they do to Allah. Allah.s plan is that He will give them no portion in the Hereafter, but a severe punishment.

177. Those who purchase Unbelief at the price of faith,- not the least harm will they do to Allah, but they will have a grievous punishment.

178. Let not the Unbelievers think that our respite to them is good for themselves: We grant them respite that they may grow(480) in their iniquity: But they will have a shameful punishment.

480 That the cup of their iniquity may be full. The appetite for sin grows with what it feeds on. The natural result is that the sinner sinks deeper into sin. If there is any freedom of will, this naturally follows, though Allah's Grace is always ready for the repentant. If the Grace is rejected, the increase of iniquity makes the nature of iniquity plainer to those who might otherwise be attracted by its glitter. The working of Allah's Law is therefore both just and merciful. See also the next verse and 9:55 .

179. Allah will not leave the believers in the state in which ye are now, until He separates what is evil from what is good(481) nor will He disclose to you the secrets of the Unseen(482). But He chooses of His Messenger. (For the purpose) whom He pleases. So believe in Allah. And His messengers: And if ye believe and do right, ye have a reward without measure.

481 The testing of good men by calamities and evil men by leaving them in the environment of good things is part of the Universal Plan, in which some freedom of choice is left to man. The psychological and subjective test is unfailing, and the separation is effected partly by the operation of the human wills, to which some freedom is allowed. But it must be effected, if only in the interests of the good.

482 Man in his weak state would be most miserable if he could see the secrets of the future or the secrets of the Unseen. But things are revealed to him from time to time as may be expedient for him, by Messengers chosen for the purpose. Our duty is to hold fast by faith and lead a good life.

180. And let not those who covetously withhold of the gifts which Allah Hath given them of His Grace(483), think that it is good for them: Nay, it will be the worse for them: soon shall the things which they covetously withheld be tied to their necks Like a twisted collar,(484) on the Day of Judgment. To Allah belongs the heritage(485) of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

483 The gifts are of all kinds: material gifts, such as wealth, property, strength of limbs, etc., or intangible gifts, such as influence, birth in a given set, intellect, skill, insight, etc., or spiritual gifts of the highest kind. The spending of all these things (apart from what is necessary for ourselves) for those who need them, is charity, and purifies our own character. The withholding of them (apart from our needs) is similarly greed and selfishness, and is strongly condemned.

484 By an apt metaphor the miser is told that his wealth or the other gifts which he hoarded will cling round his neck and do him no good. He will wish he could get rid of them, but he will not be able to do so. According to the Biblical phrase in another connection they will hang like a millstone round his neck (Matt. 18:6). The metaphor here is fuller. He hugged his wealth or his gifts about him. They will become like a heavy collar, the badge of slavery, round his neck. They will be tied tight and twisted, and they will give him pain and anguish instead of pleasure, *Cf.* also 17:13 .

485 Another metaphor is now introduced. Material wealth or property is only called ours during our short life here. So all gifts are ours in trust only; they ultimately revert to Allah, to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens or on earth *(Cf.* 6:165). (R).

181. Allah hath heard the taunt of those who say: "Truly, Allah(486) is indigent and we are rich!"- We shall certainly record their word and (their act) of slaying the prophets in defiance(487) of right, and We shall say: "Taste ye the penalty of the Scorching Fire!

486 In 2:245 we read: "Who is he that will loan to Allah a beautiful loan?" In other places charity or spending in the way of Allah is metaphorically described as giving to Allah. The Prophet often used that expression in appealing for funds to be spent in the way of Allah. The scoffers mocked and said: "So Allah is indigent and we are rich!" This blasphemy was of a piece with all their conduct in history, in slaying the Prophets and men of God.

487 For the expression "slaying in defiance of right." *Cf.* 3:21 , and 3:112.

182. "This is because of the (unrighteous deeds) which your hands sent on before ye;(488) For Allah never harms those who serve Him."

488 *Cf.* 2:95. and note.

183. They (also) said: "(Allah) took our promise not to believe in a messenger unless He showed us a sacrifice consumed by Fire(489) (From heaven)." Say: "There came to you messengers before me, with clear Signs and even with what ye ask for: why then did ye slay them, if ye speak the truth?"

489 Burnt sacrifices figured in the Mosaic Law, and in the religious ceremonies long before Moses, but it is not true that the Mosaic Law laid down a fire from heavens on a burnt sacrifice as a test of the credentials of Prophets. Even if it had been so, did the Jews obey the Prophets who showed this Sign? In Leviticus 9:23-24. we are told a burnt offering prepared by Moses and Aaron: "and there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat." Yet the people rebelled frequently against Moses, and rebellion against a Prophet is spiritually an attempt to kill him. Abel's offering (sacrifice) was probably a burnt offering: it was accepted by Allah, and he was killed by Cain out of jealousy: Gen. 4:3-8. Mosaic sacrifices were no longer needed by the people of Jesus or the people of Muhammad.

184. Then if they reject thee, so were rejected messengers before thee, who came with Clear Signs, Books of dark prophecies, and the Book of Enlightenment.(490)

490 The three things mentioned in the Text are: (1) Clear Signs *(bayyinat);* (2) *Zubur,* and (3) *al Kitab al Munir.* The signification of (1) I have explained in the note to 3:62, as far as they relate to Jesus. In a more general sense, it means the clear evidence which Allah's dealings furnish about a man of God having a true mission; *e.g.,* Moses in relation to Pharaoh, (2) The word *Zubur* has been translated as scriptures. It comes from the root *Zobam* which implies something hard. The commentators are not agreed, but the prophetic writings which seemed to contemporaries difficult to understand may well be meant here. David's psalms *(Zabur,* 4:163 and 21:105) may also come under this description. As to (3), there is no doubt about the literal meaning of the words, "the Book of Enlightenment". But what does it precisely refer to? I take it to mean the fundamental guide to conduct-the clear rules laid down in all Dispensations to help men to lead good lives. (R).

185. Every soul shall have a taste of death:(491) And only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense. Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have attained the object (of Life): For the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception.(492)

491 The soul will not die; but the death of the body will give a taste of death to the soul when the soul separates from the body. The soul will then know that this life was but a probation. And seeming inequalities will be adjusted finally on the Day of Judgement *(Cf.* 21:35 and 29:57).

492 *Cf.* Longfellow's Psalm of Life: "All this world's a fleeting show, For man's illusion given". The only Reality will be when we have attained our final goal.

186. Ye shall certainly be tried and tested in your possessions and in your personal selves;(493) and ye shall certainly Hear much that will grieve you, from those who received the Book before you and from those who worship many gods. But if ye persevere patiently, and guard against evil,-then that will be a determining factor in all affairs.

493 Not wealth and possessions only (or want of them), are the means of our trial. All our personal talents, knowledge, opportunities, and their opposites-in fact everything that happens to us and makes up our personality is a means of our testing. So is our Faith; we shall have to put up for it many insults from those who do not share it.

187. And remember Allah took a covenant from the People of the Book,(494) to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it; but they threw it away behind their backs,(495) and purchased with it some miserable gain! And vile was the bargain they made!

494 Truth-Allah's Message-comes to any man or nation as a matter of sacred trust. It should be broadcast and published and taught and made clear to all within reach. Privileged priesthood at once erects a barrier. But worse-when such priesthood tampers with the truth, taking what suits it and ignoring the rest, it has sold Allah's gift for a miserable ephemeral profit; how miserable, it will learn when Nemesis comes.

495 *Cf.* 2:101.

188. Think not that those who exult in what they have brought about, and love to be praised for what they have not done,-(496) think escape the penalty. For them is a penalty Grievous indeed.

496 A searching picture of the worldly wise! They may cause mischief and misery to others, but gloat over any glory it may bring them! They may trample down Allah's truths, and enthrone false standards of worship. They may take credit for virtues they do not possess and seeming successes that come in spite of their despicable deceptions.

189. To Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth; and Allah hath power over all things.

190. Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day,-(497) there are indeed Signs for men of understanding,-

497 See 2:164. The two items mentioned here are just brief symbols recalling the six or seven mentioned in the other passage. And those too are but brief symbols and reminders of the glorious majesty of Allah and His goodness to man.

191. Men who celebrate the praises of Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides,(498) and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (With the thought): "Our Lord! not for naught Hast Thou created (all) this! Glory to Thee! Give us(499) salvation from the penalty of the Fire.

498 That is, in all postures, which again is symbolical of all circumstances-personal, social, economic, historical and other.

499 It is the thought of Salvation that connects all these glories with man. Otherwise man would be a miserable, contemptible creature in these beauties and wonders of Nature. With his high destiny of Salvation he can be lifted even higher than these glories! The Fire is a symbol of penalty, we pray for salvation from the penalty.

192. "Our Lord! any whom Thou dost admit to the Fire, Truly Thou coverest with shame, and never will wrong-doers Find any helpers!

193. "Our Lord! we have heard the call of one calling (Us) to Faith, ´Believe ye in the Lord,´ and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and take to Thyself our souls in the company of the righteous.

194. "Our Lord! Grant us what Thou didst promise unto us through Thine messengers, and save us from shame on the Day of Judgment: For Thou never breakest Thy promise."

195. And their Lord hath accepted of them, and answered them: "Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: Ye are members, one of another:(500) Those who have left their homes, or been driven out therefrom, or suffered harm in My Cause, or fought or been slain,- verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath;- A reward from the Presence(501) of Allah, and from His presence is the best of rewards."

500 In Islam the equal status of the sexes is not only recognised but insisted on. If sex distinction, which is a distinction in nature, does not count in spiritual matters, still less of course would count artificial distinctions, such as rank, wealth, position, race, colour, birth, etc.

501 Here, and in 3:198, 4:175, and in many places elsewhere, stress is laid on the fact that whatever gift, or reward, or bliss will come to the righteous, its chief merit will be that it proceeds from the Presence of Allah Himself. "Nearness to Allah" expresses it better than any other symbol.

196. Let not the strutting about of the Unbelievers through the land deceive thee:

197. Little is it for enjoyment: Their ultimate abode is Hell: what an evil bed (To lie on)!

198. On the other hand, for those who fear their Lord, are Gardens, with rivers flowing beneath; therein are they to dwell (for ever),- a gift from the presence of Allah. and that which is in the presence of Allah is the best (bliss) for the righteous.

199. And there are, certainly, among the People of the Book, those who believe in Allah, in the revelation to you, and in the revelation to them, bowing in humility to Allah. They will not sell the Signs of Allah for a miserable gain! For them is a reward with their Lord, and Allah is swift in account.

200. O ye who believe! Persevere in patience(502) and constancy; vie in such perseverance; strengthen each other; and fear Allah. that ye may prosper.(503)

502 The full meaning of *Sabr* is to be understood here, viz.: patience, perseverance, constancy, self-restraint, refusing to be cowed down. These virtues we are to exercise for ourselves and in relation to others; we are to set an example, so that others may vie with us, and we are to vie with them, lest we fall short; in this way we strengthen each other and bind our mutual relations closer, in our common service to Allah.

503 Prosperity *(falah)* here and in other passages is to be understood in a wide sense, including prosperity in our mundane affairs as well as in spiritual progress. In both cases it implies happiness and the attainment of our wishes, purified by the love of Allah.

4. Al Nisa' (The Women)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person,(504) created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- reverence Allah, through whom(505) ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs(506) (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you.

504 *Nafs* may mean: (1) soul; (2) self; (3) person, living person; (4) will, good pleasure, as in 4:4 below. *Minha;* I follow the construction suggested by Imam RazT. The particle *min* would then suggest here not a portion or a source of something else, but a species, a nature, a similarity. The pronoun *Ha* refers of course *to Nafs (Cf.* 7:189). (R).

505 All our mutual rights and duties are referred to Allah. We are His creatures: His Will is the standard and measure of Good; and our duties are measured by our conformity with His Will. "Our wills are ours, to make them Thine," says Tennyson *(In Memoriam).* Among ourselves (human beings) our mutual rights and dudes arise out of Allah's Law, the sense of Right that is implanted in us by Him.

506 Among the most wonderful mysteries of our nature is that of sex. The unregenerate male is apt, in the pride of his physical strength, to forget the all-important part which the female plays in his very existence, and in all the social relationships that arise in our collective human lives. The mother that bore us must ever have our reverence. The wife, through whom we enter parentage, must have our reverence. Sex, which governs so much our physical life, and has so much influence on our emotional and higher nature, deserves-not our fear, or our contempt, or our amused indulgence, but-our reverence in the highest sense of the term *(Cf.* 30:21). With this fitting introduction we enter on a discussion of women, orphans, and family relationships.

2. To orphans restore their property (When they reach their age), nor substitute (your) worthless things for (their) good ones; and devour not their substance (by mixing it up)(507) with your own. For this is indeed a great sin.

507 Justice to orphans is enjoined, and three things are particularly mentioned as temptations in the way of a guardian: (1) He must not postpone restoring all his ward's property when the time comes; subject to 4:5 below. (2) If there is a list of property, it is not enough that that list should be technically followed: the property restored must be of equal value to the property received: the same principle applies where there is no list. (3) If property is managed together, or where perishable goods must necessarily be consumed, the strictest probity is necessary when the separation takes place, and this is insisted on. See also 2:220 and note.

3. If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans,(508) Marry women of your choice, Two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.(509)

508 Notice the conditional clause about orphans, introducing the rules about marriage. This reminds us of the immediate occasion of the promulgation of this verse. It was after Uhud, when the Muslim community was left with many orphans and widows and some captives of war. Their treatment was to be governed by principles of the greatest humanity and equity. The occasion is past, but the principles remain. Marry the orphans if you are quite sure that you will in that way protect their interests and their property, with perfect justice to them and to your own dependants if you have any. If not, make other arrangements for the orphans.

509 The unrestricted number of wives of the "Times of Ignorance" was now strictly limited to a maximum of four, provided you could treat them with equality (C/ 33:4 and 33:51). (R).

4. And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, Take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.

5. To those weak of understanding(510) Make not over your property,(511) which Allah hath made a means of support for you, but feed and clothe them therewith, and speak to them words of kindness and justice.

510 This applies to orphans, but the wording is perfectly general, and defines principles like those of Chancery in English Law and the Court of Wards in Indian Law. Property has not only its rights but also its responsibilities. The owner may not do just what he likes absolutely: his right is limited by the good of the community of which he is a member, and if he is incapable of understanding it, his control should be removed. This does not mean that he is harshly dealt with. On the contrary his interest must be protected, and he must be treated with special kindness because of his incapacity.

511 *Your property:* Ultimately all property belongs to Allah, and is intended for the support of the community. It is held in trust by a particular individual. If he is incapable, he is put aside but gently and with kindness. While his incapacity remains, the duties and responsibilities devolve on his guardian even more strictly than in the case of the original owner: for he may not take any of the profits for himself unless he is poor, and in that case his remuneration for his trouble must be on a scale that is no more than just and reasonable.

6. Make trial of orphans until they reach the age(512) of marriage; if then ye find sound judgment in them, release their property to them; but consume it not wastefully, nor in haste against their growing up. If the guardian is well-off, Let him claim no remuneration, but if he is poor, let him have for himself what is just and reasonable. When ye release their property to them, take witnesses in their presence: But all-sufficient is Allah in taking account.(513)

512 The age of marriage is the age when they reach their majority.

513 It is good to take human witnesses when you faithfully discharge your trust; but remember that, however fully you satisfy your fellow-men when you give your account to them, their is a stricter account due from you to Allah. If you are righteous in Allah's eyes, you must follow these stricter standards.

7. From what is left by parents and those nearest related(514) there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large,-a determinate share.

514 I have resisted the temptation to translate "next of kin," as this phrase has a technical meaning in Indian Law, referring to certain kinds of heirs, whereas here the people meant are those whose inheritance is to be divided. The shares are specified. Here the general principles are laid down that females inherit as well as males, and that relatives who have no legal shares, orphans, and indigent people are not to be treated harshly, if present at the division. (R).

8. But if at the time of division other relatives, or orphans or poor, are present, feed them out of the (property), and speak to them words of kindness and justice.

9. Let those (disposing of an estate) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own if they had left a helpless family behind: Let them fear Allah, and speak words of appropriate (comfort).(515)

515 It is a touching argument addressed to those who have to divide an estate. 'How anxious would you be if you had left a helpless family behind?' If others do so, help and be kind.

10. Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, eat up a Fire into their own bodies: They will soon be enduring a Blazing Fire!

11. Allah (thus) directs you as regards your Children´s(516) (Inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters, two or more,(517) their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half. For parents, a sixth share of the inheritance to each, if the deceased left children; if no children, and the parents are the (only) heirs, the mother has a third; if the deceased Left brothers (or sisters) the mother has a sixth. (The distribution in all cases (´s) after the payment of legacies and debts. Ye know not whether your parents or your children are nearest to you in benefit. These are settled portions ordained(518) by Allah. and Allah is All-knowing, All-wise.

516 The principles of inheritance law are laid down in broad outline in the Qur'an; the precise details have been worked out on the basis of the Prophet's practice and that of his Companions, and by interpretation and analogy. Muslim jurists have collected a vast amount of learning on this subject, and this body of law is enough by itself to form the subject of life-long study. Here we shall deal only with the broad principles to be gathered from the Text, as interpreted by the Jurists.

(1) The power of testamentary disposition extends over only one-third of the Property; the remaining two-thirds are distributed among heirs as laid down. (2) All distribution takes place after the legacies and debts (including funeral expenses) have first been paid. (3) Legacies cannot be left to any of the heirs included in the scheme of distribution; or it will amount to upsetting the shares and undue preference of one heir to another. (4) Generally, but not always, the male takes a share double that of a female in his own category.

517 At first sight, the Arabic words seem to mean: "If more than two daughters." But the alternative in the next clause is: "if only one daughter." Logically, therefore, the first clause must mean: "if daughters, two or more." This is the general interpretation, and is confirmed by the supplementary provision in 4:176 at the end of the Surah, which should be read along with this.

518 The verse deals with the portions allotted to (a) children, and (b) parents. The next verse deals with the portions allotted to (c) husband or wife of the deceased, and (d) collaterals. The children's shares are fixed, but their amount will depend upon what goes to the parents. If both parents are living, and there are also children, both father and mother take a sixth each; if only one parent is living, he or she takes his or her sixth; and the rest goes to the children. If the parents are living, and there is no child or other heir, the mother gets a third (and the father the remaining two-thirds); if there are no children, but there are brothers or sisters (this is interpreted strictly in the plural), the mother has a sixth, and the father apparently the residue, as the father excludes collaterals. This is far from being an exhaustive statement, but it establishes the proposition that children and parents have always some share if they survive, but their shares are affected by the existence and number of the heirs in these categories.

12. In what your wives leave, your share is a half, if they leave no child; but if they leave a child, ye get a fourth; after payment of legacies and debts. In what ye leave, their share is a fourth,(519) if ye leave no child; but if ye leave a child, they get an eighth; after payment of legacies and debts. If the man or woman whose inheritance is in question, has left neither ascendants nor descendants,(520) but has left a brother(521) or a sister, each one of the two gets a sixth; but if more than two, they share in a third; after payment of legacies and debts; so that no loss(522) is caused (to any one). Thus is it ordained by Allah. and Allah is All-knowing, Most Forbearing.

519 The husband takes a half of his deceased wife's property if she leaves no child, the rest going to residuaries; if she leaves a child, the husband gets only a fourth. Following the rule that the female share is generally half the male share, the widow gets a fourth of her deceased husband's property, if he leaves no children, and an eighth if he leaves children. If there are more windows than one, their collective share is a fourth or an eighth as the case may be: *inter se* they divide equally.

520 The word in Arabic is *kalalah,* which is so construed usually. But it was nowhere defined authoritatively in the lifetime of the Messenger. This was one of the three terms about which Umar wished that the Messenger had defined than in his lifetime, the other two being *khilafah,* and *riba* (usury). On the accepted definition, we are concerned with the inheritance of a person who has left no descendant or ascendant (however distant), but only collaterals, with or without a widow or widower. If there is a widow or widower surviving, she or he takes the share as already defined, before the collaterals come in.

521 A "brother or sister" is here interpreted to mean a uterine brother or sister, *i.e.,* a brother or sister by the same mother but not by the same father, as the case of full brothers and sisters or brothers and sisters by the same father but different mothers is understood to be dealt with later, in the last verse of this Surah. The uterine brother or sister, if only one survives, takes a sixth, if more than one survives, they take a third collectively, and divide among themselves; this on the supposition that there are no descendants or ascendants, however remote. There may, however, be a widow or widower surviving: she or he takes her or his share, as already specified.

The shares of collaterals generally are calculated on a complicated system which cannot be described in a brief note. For these, and the rules about Residuaries (' *Asaba)* reference should be made to special legal treatises.

522 Debts (in which funeral expenses take first rank) and legacies are the first charge on the estate of a deceased person, before distribution takes place. But equity and fair dealing should be observed in all matters, so that no one's interests are prejudiced. Thus funeral expenses should be reasonable; debts must be genuine and not reckless debts; and the shares must be calculated with fairness.

13. Those are limits set by Allah. those who obey Allah and His Messenger will be admitted to Gardens with rivers flowing beneath, to abide therein (for ever) and that will be the supreme achievement.(522-A)

522-A . *Cf.* 44:57, n. 4733. (R).

14. But those who disobey Allah and His Messenger and transgress His limits will be admitted to a Fire, to abide therein: And they shall have a humiliating punishment.

15. If any of your women are guilty of lewdness,(523) Take the evidence of four(524) (Reliable) witnesses from amongst you against them; and if they testify, confine them to houses until death do claim them, or Allah ordain for them some (other) way.(525)

523 Most commentators understand this to refer to adultery or fornication: in that case they consider that the punishment was altered to 100 stripes by the later verse, 24:2. But I think it refers to unnatural crime between women, analogous to unnatural crime between men in 4:16 below; because (1) no punishment is specified here for the man, as would be the case where a man was involved in the crime; (2) the word, *at lati,* the purely feminine plural of *al lati,* is used for the parties to the crime; (3) the punishment is indefinite; see the next note but one.

524 To protect the honour of women, stricter evidence is required, *i.e.,* the evidence of four instead of the usual two witnesses. It is the same for adultery (see 24:4.)

525 Keep them in prison until some definite order is received. Those who take the crime to be adultery or fornication construe this definite order ("some other way") to mean some definite pronouncement by the Prophet under inspiration; this was the punishment of flogging under 24:2. for fornication, and stoning to death under the Prophet's directive for adultery. If we understand the crime to be unnatural crime, we might presume, in the absence of any definite order ("some other way") that the punishment would be similar to that for men in the next verse.

16. If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, Leave them alone; for Allah is Oft-returning, Most Merciful.

17. Allah accept the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon afterwards; to them will Allah turn in mercy: For Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

18. Of no effect is the repentance of those who continue(526) to do evil, until death faces one of them, and he says, "Now have I repented indeed;" nor

of those who die rejecting Faith: for them have We prepared a punishment most grievous.

526 Note the fine touch. A sin may be fashionable, and people may sin together without compunction. When one of them is faced with Death, he repents, but that sort of repentance is no good. For more detailed discussion, *(Cf.* notes to 24:2-6 and 4:15 .) (Eds.)

19. O ye who believe! Ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will.(527) Nor should ye treat them with harshness, that ye may Take away part of the dower(528) ye have given them,-except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good.

527 Among many nations, including Arabs in the Days of Ignorance, a step-son or brother took possession of a dead man's widow or widows along with his goods and chattels. This shameful custom is forbidden. See also 4:22 below.

528 Another trick, to detract from the freedom of married women was to treat them badly and force them to sue for a *Khul'divorce* (see 2:229, n. 258) or its equivalent in pre-Islamic custom, when the dower could be claimed back. This is also forbidden. Or the harshness may be exercised in another way; a divorced woman may be prevented by those who have control of her, from re-marrying unless she remits her dower. All kinds of harshness are forbidden.

20. But if ye decide to take one wife in place of another, even if ye had given the latter a whole treasure(529) for dower, Take not the least bit of it back: Would ye take it by slander and manifest wrong?

529 Treasure: *Qintar=a.* talent of gold: see 3:14 , first note.

21. And how could ye take it when ye have gone in unto each other, and they have Taken from you a solemn covenant?

22. And marry not women whom your fathers married,- except what is past: It was shameful and odious,- an abominable custom indeed.(530)

530 See above; 4:19 , n. 527.

23. Prohibited to you (For marriage) are:-(531) Your mothers, daughters,(532) sisters; father´s sisters, Mother´s sisters; brother´s daughters, sister´s daughters; foster-mothers(533) (Who gave you suck), foster-sisters; your wives´ mothers; your step-daughters under your(534) guardianship, born of your wives to whom ye have gone in,- no prohibition if ye have not gone in;- (Those who have been) wives of your sons(535) proceeding from your loins; and two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time,(536) except for what is past; for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful;-

531 This Table of Prohibited Degrees agrees in the main with what is usually accepted among all nations, except in minor details. It begins in the last verse (with father's widows or divorcees). The scheme is drawn upon the assumption that the person who proposes to marry is a man; if it is a woman, the same scheme will apply, *mutatis mutandis;* it will read: "your fathers, sons, brothers," etc.; or you can always read it from the husband's view of relationship, as there must always be a husband in a marriage.

532 "Mother" includes grandmother (through the father or mother), great - grandmother, etc.; "daughter" includes granddaughter through son or daughter), great-granddaughter, etc.; "sister," includes full-sister and half-sister. "Father's sister" includes grandfather's sister, etc. and "mother's sister" includes grandmother's sister, etc.

533 "Fosterage" or milk-relationships play an important part in Muslim Law, and count like blood-relationships; it would therefore seem that not only foster-mothers and foster-sisters, but foster-mother's sister, etc., all come within the prohibited degrees.

534 It is generally held that "under your guardianship" is a description, not a condition. (R).

535 "Sons" includes grandsons, but excludes adopted sons, or persons treated as such, on account of the words "proceeding from your loins" *(Cf.* 33:4).

536 The bar against two sisters in marriage together applies to aunt and niece together, but not to deceased wife's sister after the wife dies.

24. Also (prohibited are) women already married, except those whom your right hands possess:(537) Thus hath Allah ordained (Prohibitions) against you: Except for these, all others are lawful, provided ye seek (them in marriage) with gifts from your property,- desiring chastity, not lust, (538)seeing that ye derive benefit from them, give them their dowers (at least)(539) as prescribed; but if, after a dower is prescribed, agree Mutually (to vary it), there is no blame on you, and Allah is All-knowing, All-wise.

537 *Whom your right hands possess: i.e.,* captives in a Jihad. (R).

538 After defining the prohibited degrees, the verse proceeds to say that women other than those specified may be sought in marriage, but even so, not from motives of lust, but in order to promote chastity between the sexes. Marriage in the original Arabic is here described by a -word which suggests a fortress *(hisn);* maniage is, therefore, the fortress of chastity.

539 As the woman in marriage surrenders her person, so the man also must surrender (besides some part of his independence) at least some of his property according to his means. And this gives rise to the law of dower. A minimum dower is prescribed, but it is not necessary to stick to the minimum, and in the new relationship created, the parties are recommended to act towards each other with the greatest confidence and liberality.

25. If any of you have not the means wherewith to wed free believing women, they may wed believing girls from among those whom your right hands possess:(540) And Allah hath full knowledge about your faith. Ye are one from another: Wed them with the leave of their owners, and give them their dowers, according to what is reasonable: They should be chaste, not lustful, nor taking paramours: when they are taken in wedlock, if they fall into shame, their punishment is half that for free women. This (permission) is for those among you who fear sin; but it is better for you that ye practise self-restraint. And Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

540 That is, captives taken Jihad: *Your right hands* does not mean necessarily that she has been assigned to you, or is your property. All captures in war belong to the community, they are "yours" in that sense. If you seek such a person in marriage, do it from no base motives. Safeguard your faith, and see that she too does believe. In that case, after all, she is of the human brotherhood, and her condition is accidental and redeemable. If the slave bore a child to her master, she would become free. (R).

26. Allah doth wish to make clear to you and to show you the ordinances of those before you; and (He doth wish to) turn to you (In Mercy): And Allah is All-knowing, All-wise.

27. Allah doth wish to Turn to you, but the wish of those who follow their lusts is that ye should turn away (from Him),- far, far away.

28. Allah doth wish to lighten your (difficulties): For man was created Weak (in flesh).

29. O ye who believe!(541) Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: But let there be amongst you Traffic and trade by mutual good-will: Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful!

541 Let me paraphrase this verse, for there is profound meaning in it. (1) All your property you hold in trust, whether it is in your name, or belongs to the community, or to people over whom you have control. To waste is wrong. (2) In 2:188 the same phrase occurred, to caution us against greed. Here it occurs, to encourage us to increase property by economic use (traffic and trade), recalling Christ's parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30), where the servants who had increased their master's wealth were promoted and the servant who had hoarded was cast into darkness. (3) We are warned that our waste may mean our own destruction ("nor kill or destroy yourselves.") But there is a more general meaning also: we must be careful of our own and other people's lives We must commit no violence. This is the opposite of "trade and traffic by mutual good will." (4) Our violence to our own brethren is particularly preposterous, seeing that Allah has loved and showered His mercies on us and all His creatures.

30. If any do that in rancour and injustice,- soon shall We cast them into the Fire: And easy it is for Allah.

31. If ye (but) eschew the most heinous of the things which ye are forbidden to do, We shall expel out of you all the evil in you, and admit you to a gate of great honour.

32. And in no wise covet(542) those things in which Allah Hath bestowed His gifts More freely on some of you than on others: To men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn: But ask Allah of His bounty. For Allah hath full knowledge of all things.

542 Men and women have gifts from Allah-some greater than others. They seem unequal, but we are assured that Providence has allotted them by a scheme by which people receive what they earn. If this does not appear clear in our sight, let us remember that we have no full knowledge but Allah has. We must not be jealous if other people have more than we have-in wealth or position or strength or honour or talent or happiness. Probably things are equalized in the aggregate or in the long run, or equated to needs and merits on a scale which we cannot appraise. If we want more, instead of being jealous or covetous, we should pray to Allah and place before Him our needs. Though He knows all, and has no need of our prayer, our prayer may reveal to ourselves our shortcomings and enable us to deserve more of Allah's bouncy or make ourselves fit for it.

33. To (benefit) every one, We have appointed shares and heirs(543) to property left by parents and relatives. To those, also, to whom your right hand was pledged,(544) give their due portion. For truly Allah is witness to all things.

543 *Mawali,* plural of *Mawla;* from the root *wala,* to be near in place or relationship, to follow. *Mawla* may therefore mean: (1) nearly related, (2) heir, (3) sharer or partner; these three meanings are implied here; (4) neighbour, or friend, or protector, or client (44:41); (5) lord or master (16:76).

544 When the emigration took place from Makkah to Madman, bonds and links of brotherhood were established between the "Emigrants" and the "Helpers," and they shared in each other's inheritance. Later, when the Community was solidly established, and relations with those left behind in Makkah were resumed, the rights of blood-relations in Makkah, and the Helper-brethren in Madinah were both safeguarded. This is the particular meaning. The more genera! meaning is similar; respect your ties of blood, of neighbourhood, and of friendly compacts and understandings. Be just to all.

34. Men are the protectors(545) and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband´s) absence what Allah would have them guard.(546) As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first),(547) (Next), refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them (lightly);(547-A) but if they return to obedience, seek not against them(548) Means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, great (above you all).

545 *Qawwam:* one who stands firm in another's business, protects his interests, and looks after his affairs; or it may be, standing firm in his own business, managing affairs, with a steady purpose (*Cf.* 4:135 and 2:228).

546 Or the sentence may be rendered: "and protect (the husband's interests) in his absence, as Allah has protected them. If we take the rendering as in the text, the meaning is: the good wife is obedient and harmonious in her husband's presence, and in his absence guards his reputation and property and her own virtue, as ordained by Allah. If we take the rendering as in the note, we reach the same result in a different way: the good wife, in her husband's absence, remembering how Allah has given her a sheltered position, does everything to justify that position by guarding her own virtue and his reputation and property.

547 In case of family jars four steps are mentioned, to be taken in that order: (1) perhaps verbal advice or admonition may be sufficient; (2) if not, sex relations may be suspended; (3) if this is not sufficient, some slight physical correction may be administered; but Imam Shafi'i considers this inadvisable, though permissible, and all authorities are unanimous in deprecating any sort of cruelty, even of the nagging kind, as mentioned in the next clause; (4)-if all this fails, a family council is recommended in 4:35 below.

547-A . The word "daraba" is used in the Qur'an with about 17 different meanings including avoid, separate, leave, travel etc. The Qur'an is best interpreted through the deeds and sayings of the Prophet. The fact that the Prophet never battered or spanked any wife and detested any such action, gives credence that the meaning intended here by "wadribuhunna" is to stay away from a discordant wife in the hope that this will let her realize an impending separation and divorce. (Eds.)

548 Temper, nagging, sarcasm, speaking at each other in other people's presence, reverting to past faults which should be forgiven and forgotten-all this is forbidden. And the reason given is characteristic of Islam. You must live all your life as in the presence of Allah, Who is high above us, but Who watches over us. How petty and contemptible will our little squabbles appear in His presence!

35. If ye fear a breach between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers;(549) if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation: For Allah hath full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things.

549 An excellent plan for settling family disputes, without too much publicity or mud-throwing, or resort to the chicaneries of the law. The Latin countries recognise this plan in their legal systems. It is a pity that Muslims do not resort to it universally, as they should. The arbiters from each family would know the idiosyncrasies of both parties, and would be able, with Allah's help to effect a real reconciliation.

36. Serve Allah, and join not(550) any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near,(551) neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side,(552) the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess:(553) For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious;-(554)

550 The essence of Islam is to serve Allah and do good to your fellow-creatures. This is wider and more comprehensive than "Love God and love your neighbour". For it includes duties to animals as our fellow-creatures, and emphasises practical service rather than sentiment.

551 *Neighbours who are near:* that is, in local situation as well as intimate relationships, just as *neighbours who are strangers* includes those whom we do not know or who live away from us or in a different sphere altogether.

552 The *Companion by your side may be* your intimate friends and associates, just as the *wayfarer you meet* may be a carnal acquaintance on your travels. This last is much wider than the "stranger within your gate."

553 *What your right hands possess:* For the meaning of the phrase see n. 537 above. (R).

554 Real deeds of service and kindness proceed, not from showing off or from a superior sort of condescension (*Cf.* "White Man's Burden"), but from a frank recognition of our own humility and the real claims, before Allah, of all our fellow-creatures. For in our mutual needs we are equal before Allah, or perhaps the best of us (as the world sees us) may be worse than the worst of us (from the same point of view).

37. (Nor) those who are niggardly or enjoin niggardliness on others, or hide the bounties which Allah hath bestowed(555) on them; for We have prepared, for those who resist Faith, a punishment that steeps(556) them in contempt;-

555 Arrogance is one reason why our deeds of love and kindness do not thrive. Another is niggardliness or selfishness. Allah does not love either the one or the other, for they both proceed from want of love of Allah, or faith in Allah. Miserly is the worldly-wise man who not only refuses to spend himself in service, but by example and precept prevents others from doing so, as otherwise he would be made odious by comparison, before his fellow-creatures. So he either makes a virtue of his caution, or hides the gifts which have been given him-wealth, position, talent, etc.

556 Note how the punishment fits the crime. The miser holds other people in contempt, and in doing so, becomes himself contemptible.

38. Not those who spend of their substance, to be seen(557) of men, but have no faith in Allah and the Last Day: If any take the Evil One for their intimate, what a dreadful intimate he is!

557 A fault opposed to miserliness, and equally opposed to true charity, is to spend lavishly to be seen of men. It is mere hypocrisy; there is no love in it, either for Allah or for man.

39. And what burden Were it on them if they had faith in Allah and in the Last Day, and they spent out of what Allah hath given them for sustenance?(558) For Allah hath full knowledge of them.

558 *Sustenance:* physical, intellectual, spiritual-every thing pertaining to life and growth. Our being is from Allah, and we must therefore spend ourselves freely for Allah. How can it be a burden? It is merely a response to the demand of our own healthy nature.

40. Allah is never unjust in the least degree: If there is any good (done), He doubleth it, and giveth from His own presence a great reward.(559)

559 Any little good of our own comes from the purity of our heart. Its results in the world are doubled and multiplied by Allah's grace and mercy; but an even greater reward comes from His own Presence, His good pleasure, which brings us nearer to Him *(Cf.* 28:75 and 33:45).

41. How then if We brought from each people a witness, and We brought thee as a witness against these people!(560)

560 Each Prophet and Leader is a witness for his People and his contemporaries - for those who accept Allah, and against those who reject Him.

42. On that day those who reject Faith and disobey the messenger will wish that the earth Were made one with them:(561) But never will they hide a single fact from Allah.

561 Those who reject Allah's message will wish, when their eyes are opened, that they were reduced to dust, for existence itself will be agony to them. They might like to hide in the dust, but nothing is hidden from Allah. All their past will stand out clear before Him.

43. O ye who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind befogged,(562) until ye can understand all that ye say,- nor in a state of ceremonial impurity (Except when travelling on the road), until after washing your whole body. If ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water,(563) then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. For Allah doth blot out sins and forgive again and again.

562 The reference is either to a state of intoxication or to a dazed state of mind on account of drowsiness or some other cause; or perhaps both are implied. Before the prohibition of intoxicants altogether was promulgated, it was at least unbecoming that people should come to prayers in such a state. For prayers it is only right that we should collect our whole minds and approach Allah in a spirit of reverence. "Prayers" *(Salah)* here may mean "a place of prayers," a Mosque: the resulting meaning would be the same.

563 The strictest cleanliness and purity of mind and body are required, especially at the time of prayer. But there are circumstances when water for ablutions is not easily obtainable, especially in the dry conditions of Arabia , and then washing with dry sand or clean earth is recommended. Four such circumstances are mentioned: the two last when washing is specially required; the two first when washing may be necessary, but it may not be easy to get water. For a man, when he is ill, cannot walk out far to get water, and a man on ajourney has no full control over his supplies. In all four cases, where water cannot be got, cleaning with dry sand or dry earth is recommended. This is called *Tayammum, (Cf.* 4:159 and 5:6).

44. Hast thou not turned Thy vision to those who were given a portion(564) of the Book? they traffic in error, and wish that ye should lose the right path.

564 *Cf.* 3:23 and n. 366.

45. But Allah hath full knowledge of your enemies: Allah is enough for a protector, and Allah is enough for a Helper.

46. Of the Jews there are those who displace words from their (right) places, and say: "We hear and we disobey";(565) and "Hear what is not Heard"; and "Ra´ina";(566) with a twist of their tongues and a slander to Faith. If only they had said: "What hear and we obey"; and "Do hear"; and "Do look at us"; it would have been better for them, and more proper; but Allah hath cursed them for their Unbelief; and but few of them will believe.

565 See 2:93, n. 98. A trick of the Jews was to twist words and expressions, so as to ridicule the most solemn teachings of Faith. Where they should have said, "We hear and we obey," they said aloud, "We hear," and whispered, "We disobey." Where they should have said respectfully, "We hear," they added in a whisper, "May you not hear," by way of ridicule. Where they claimed the attention of the Teacher, they used an ambiguous word apparently harmless, but in their intention disrespectful. (R).

566 See 2:104, n. 106, *Ra'ina* if used respectfully in the Arabic way, would have meant "Please attend to us." With a twist of their tongue, they suggested an insulting meaning, such as "O thou that takes us to pasture!" or in Hebrew, "Our bad one!"

47. O ye People of the Book! believe in what We have (now) revealed, confirming what was (already) with you, before We change the face and fame(567) of some (of you) beyond all recognition, and turn them hindwards, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-breakers,(568) for the decision of Allah Must be carried out.

567 Literally, "before We obliterate some features (or faces) and turn them front to back (or back to front)": an Arabic idiom, which must be translated freely to yield its proper meaning in English. The face is the chief expression of a man's own real essence; it is also the index of his fame and estimation. The People of the Book had been specially favoured by Allah with spiritual revelations, If they proved themselves unworthy, they lost their "face". Their eminence, would, owing to their own conduct, be turned into degradation. Others would take their place. The first shall be last and the last shall be first: Matt. 19:30.

568 *Cf.* 2:65 and n 79.

48. Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin(569) Most heinous indeed.

569 Just as in an earthly kingdom the worst crime is that of treason, as it cuts at the very existence of the State, so in the spiritual kingdom, the unforgivable sin is that of contumacious treason against Allah by putting up Allah's creatures in rivalry against Him. This is rebellion against the essence and source of spiritual Life. It is what Plato would call the "lie in the soul.." But even here, if the rebellion is through ignorance, and is followed by sincere repentance and amendment, Allah's Mercy is always open (4:17).

49. Hast thou not turned Thy vision to those who claim sanctity for themselves?(570) Nay-but Allah Doth

sanctify whom He pleaseth. But never will they fail to receive justice in the least little thing.(571)

570 The sanctimonious or self-sanctified people are the farthest from sanctity or purity, which can only proceed from Allah. They cannot play with Allah's Truth and yet go on claiming co be guided and purified or justified by Allah. Their falsehood in itself condemns them; no further proof is needed of their selfishness and evil.

571 Literally, the small skin in the groove of a date stone, a thing of no value:fatila.

50. Behold! how they invent a lie against Allah. but that by itself is a manifest sin!

51. Hast thou not turned Thy vision to those who were given a portion(572) of the Book? they believe in sorcery and Evil,(573) and say to the Unbelievers that they are better guided in the (right) way Than the believers!

572 *Cf.* 3:23 and n. 366. The phrase also occurs in 4:44 .

573 The word I have translated *Sorcery* is *jibt,* which may mean divination, sorcery, magic, or any false object of belief or worship, such as an idol. The word I have translated *Evil* (here and in 2:256) is *Taghut,* which means the evil one, the one who exceeds all bounds, Satan; or it may refer to some idol worshipped by the Pagan Arabs, with whom the Jews of MadTn ah were intriguing against the Prophet. The Jews had taken much to sorcery, magic, divination, and such superstitions, *(Cf.* 16:51).

52. They are (men) whom Allah hath cursed: And those whom Allah Hath cursed, thou wilt find, have no one to help.(574)

574 The Jews were then seeking the aid of the Makkan Pagans against Muhammad, but far from getting any help from them, they and the Pagans were both overthrown. That was the immediate occasion, but the words have a perfectly general - a universal - meaning.

53. Have they a share in dominion or power? Behold, they give not a farthing(575) to their fellow-men?

575 The word I have translated *farthing* is *naqir,* the groove in a date stone, a thing of no value whatever. Close-fistedness and envy are among the worst forms of selfishness, and appear specially incongruous in people of power, authority, or influence, from whom is expected generosity in giving and generosity in seeing other people's prosperity or happiness, *(Cf.* 35:13).

54. Or do they envy mankind for what Allah hath given them of his bounty? but We had already given the people of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and conferred upon them a great kingdom.(576)

576 Such as the kingdoms of David and Solomon, for they had international fame.

55. Some of them believed, and some of them averted their faces from him: And enough is Hell for a burning fire.(577)

577 Envy is like the eternal fire, which is in itself a hell.

56. Those who reject our Signs, We shall soon cast into the Fire: as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty: for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

57. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, We shall soon admit to Gardens, with rivers flowing beneath,- their eternal home: Therein shall they have companions pure and holy:(578) We shall admit them to shades, cool and ever deepening.(579)

578 *Cf.* 2:25 and n. 44.

579 The Garden is contrasted with the Fire: the shade is contrasted with the roasting. Evil grows with what it feeds on. So goodness and felicity grow with their practice. The good may be alone to start with, but (unlike evil ones) they get Holy Companions. Just as agony increases with what it suffers (typified by fresh skins growing as the old ones burn out), so felicity finds deeper and deeper meaning (typified by the shades in a garden, which grow deeper and cooler as you proceed into the interior), *(Cf.* 13:35).

58. Allah doth command you to render back your Trusts to those to whom they are due; And when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice: Verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For Allah is He Who heareth and seeth all things.

59. O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you.(580) If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination.

580 *Uli al amr*= those charged with authority or responsibility or decision, or the settlement of affairs. All ultimate authority rests in Allah. Prophets of Allah derive their authority from Him. As Islam makes no sharp division between sacred and secular affairs, it expects governments to he imbued with righteousness. Likewise Islam expects Muslims to respect the authority of such government for otherwise there can be no order or discipline. (R).

60. Hast thou not turned Thy vision to those(581) who declare that they believe in the revelations that have come to thee and to those before thee? Their (real) wish is to resort together for judgment (in their disputes) to the Evil One, though they were ordered to reject him. But Satan´s wish is to lead them astray far away (from the right).

581 The immediate reference was to the hypocrites *(Munafiqin)* of Madinah, but the words are general, and the evil of hypocrisy has to be dealt with in all ages. This type of man is what is called Mr. Facing-both-ways in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." Such men declare that they are always with the Right, but calmly intrigue with evil and injustice, and even make injustice their judge if their personal interests arc served in that way.

61. When it is said to them: "Come to what Allah hath revealed, and to the Messenger.: Thou seest the Hypocrites avert their faces from thee in disgust.

62. How then, when they are seized by misfortune, because of the deeds which they hands have sent forth? Then their come to thee, swearing by Allah. "We meant no more than good-will and conciliation!"

63. Those men,-(Allah) knows what is in their hearts; so keep clear of them,(582) but admonish them, and speak to them a word to reach their very souls.

582 How should hypocrites be treated? To take them into your confidence would of course be foolish. To wage unrelenting war against them may destroy the hope of reforming diem and purging diem of their hypocrisy. The Prophet of Allah keeps clear of their wiles, but at the same time, does not hesitate to show them the error of their ways, nor to put in a word in season, to penetrate their hearts and win them back to Allah.

64. We sent not a messenger, but to be obeyed, in accordance with the will of Allah. If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves, come unto thee and asked Allah.s forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah indeed Oft-returning, Most Merciful.

65. But no, by the Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against Thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.(583)

583 The test of true Faith is not mere lip profession, but bringing all our doubts and disputes to the one in whom we profess faith. Further, when a decision is given we are not only to accept it, but find in our inmost souls no difficulty and no resistance, but on the contrary a joyful acceptance springing from the conviction of our own faith.

66. If We had ordered them to sacrifice their lives or to leave their homes, very few of them would have done it:(584) But if they had done what they were (actually) told, it would have been best for them, and would have gone farthest to strengthen their (faith);

584 The highest in faith willingly sacrifice their lives, their homes, and all that they hold dearest, in the cause of Allah. Those whose faith is not so strong are expected at least to do what a loyal member of any society does, submit his doubts and disputes to the head of the society and cheerfully accept his decision and submit to it. The contrast is between the hypocrites who will not even do this, and the really devoted men and women who would voluntarily sacrifice their lives.

67. And We should then have given them from our presence a great reward;

68. And We should have shown them the Straight Way.(585)

585 Four advantages of obedience to Allah are mentioned, in the order in which they will appeal to the beginner in faith: (1) his own benefit ("best for them"); (2) strengthening of his faith, as he becomes more and more at home in the spiritual world; (3) reward from Allah's own Presence, such intense conviction that no further arguments are needed; (4) the Straight Way, in which there is no doubt or difficulty whatever in our practical conduct.

69. All who obey Allah and the messenger are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah,- of the prophets (who teach), the sincere (lovers of Truth), the witnesses (who testify), and the Righteous (who do good): Ah! what a beautiful Fellowship!(586)

586 A passage of the deepest spiritual meaning. Even the humblest man who accepts Faith and does good becomes at once an accepted member of a great and beautiful spiritual Fellowship. It is a company which lives perpetually in the sunshine of Allah's Grace. (This passage partly illustrates 1:5). It is a glorious hierarchy, of which four grades are specified: (1) The highest is that of the Prophets or Apostles, who get plenary inspiration from Allah, and who teach mankind by example and precept. That rank in Islam is held by Muhammad Mustafa. (2) The next are those whose badge is sincerity and truth; they love and support the truth with their person, their means, their influence, and all that is theirs. That rank was held by the special companions of Muhammad, among whom the type was that of Abu Bakr Siddiq. (3) The next are the noble army of Witnesses, who testify to the truth. The testimony may be by martyrdom. Or it may be by the tongue of the true preacher or the pen of the devoted scholar, or the life of the man devoted to service. (4) Lastly, there is the large company of righteous people, the ordinary folk who do their ordinary business, but always in a righteous way. They are the rank and file of the beautiful Fellowship, in which each has his place and yet all feel that they derive glory from the common association, *(Cf.* 29:9). (R).

70. Such is the bounty from Allah. And sufficient is it that Allah knoweth all.(587)

587 If a generous General gives the private soldier the privilege of sitting with his comrades and officers, high and low, in one common Brotherhood, people may perhaps wonder: how may this be? If we are admitted to that Fellowship, we want to know no more. It is enough to us that Allah knows our humility and our unworthiness, and with His full knowledge admits us to that glorious Fellowship!

71. O ye who believe! Take your precautions, and either go forth in parties or go forth all together.(588)

588 No fight should be undertaken without due preparations and precautions. When these are taken, we must go boldly forward. "Go forth" is therefore repeated for emphasis. But we must go forth in a collective spirit-either in small parries or all together, as our Leader determines. We must not tarry like the doubter in the next two verses.

72. There are certainly among you men who would tarry behind:(589) If a misfortune befalls you, they say: "(Allah) did favour us in that we were not present among them."

589 The doubter detaches himself in thought and action from the community. If the general body has a reverse, he blesses Allah that he was not among them, instead of being ashamed of himself for desertion. If the general body wins a success, he does not rejoice from the common cause, but only regrets for himself that he was not there to share in the glory and the gains!

73. But if good fortune comes to you from Allah, they would be sure to say - as if there had never been Ties of affection between you and them - "Oh! I wish I had been with them; a fine thing should I then have made of it!"(590)

590 Just a selfish man's thought. Such men are far from being a source of strength to their community. They are no use in a fight, and the next verse by implication discards them.

74. Let those fight in the cause of Allah Who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter.(591) To him who fighteth in the cause of Allah,- whether he is slain or gets victory - Soon shall We give him a reward of great (value).

591 It is not everyone—least of all, poltroons and fainthearted persons—who is fit to fight in the cause of Allah. To do so is a privilege, and those who understand the privilege are prepared to sacrifice all their interests in this life, and this life itself; for they know that it is the sacrifice of something fleeting and of little value, for the sake of something everlasting, and of immense value. Whether (in appearance) they win or lose, in reality they win the prize for which they are fighting —*viz.,* honour and glory in the sight of Allah. Note that the only alternatives here are death or victory! The true fighter knows no defeat.

75. And why should ye not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak,(592) are ill-treated (and oppressed)?- Men, women, and children, whose cry is: "Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from thee one who will protect; and raise for us from thee one who will help!"(593)

592 *Mustad'af=one* reckoned weak, and therefore ill-treated and oppressed. *(Cf.* 4:98, 4:127 and 7:150).

593 Even from the human point of view the cause of Allah is the cause of justice, the cause of the oppressed. In the great persecution, before Makkah was won again, what sorrows, threats, tortures, and oppressions, were suffered by those whose faith was unshaken? Muhammad's life and that of his adherents was threatened: they were mocked, assaulted, insulted and beaten; those within the power of the enemy were put into chains and cast into prison: others were boycotted, and shut out of trade, business, and social intercourse; they could not even buy the food they wanted, or perform their religious duties. The persecution was redoubled for the believing slaves, women, and children after the Hijrah. Their cry for a protector and helper from Allah was answered when Muhammad, the Chosen One, brought freedom and peace to Makkah again.

76. Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who reject Faith Fight in the cause of Evil: So fight ye against the Friends(594) of Satan: feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan.

594 *Awliya* ' plural of *wali,* friend, supporter, protector, patron: from the same root as *mawla,* for which see 4:33 , n. 543.

77. Hast thou not turned Thy vision to those who were told to hold back(595) their hands (from fight) but establish regular prayers and spend in regular charity? When (at length) the order for fighting was issued to them, behold! a section of them feared men as - or even more than - they should have feared Allah. They said: "Our Lord! Why hast Thou ordered us to fight? Wouldst Thou not Grant us respite to our (natural) term,(596) near (enough)?" Say: "Short is the enjoyment of this world: the Hereafter is the best

for those who do right: Never will ye be dealt with unjustly in the very least!

595 Before the command for fighting was issued there were some who were impatient, and could scarcely be held back. They wanted fighting from human motives-pugnacity, the love of plunder, hatred against their enemies, the gaining of personal ends. Fighting from such motives is wrong at all times. When the testing time came, and they had to fight, not for their own land, but for a Sacred Cause, in which there was much suffering and little personal gain, the hypocrites held back and were afraid.

596 "Our natural term of life," they would say, "is short enough: why should we jeopardize it by fighting in which there is no personal gain?" The answer is begun in this verse and continued in the next.

Briefly, the answer is: (1) in any case the pleasures of this world are short: this life is fleeting; the first thing for a righteous man to do is to emancipate himself from its obsessions; (2) to do your duty is to do right; therefore turn your attention mainly to duty; (3) when duty calls for self-sacrifice, be sure that Allah's call is never unjust, and never such as to exceed your capacity; and (4) if you fear death, you will not by fear escape death; it will find you out wherever you are; why not face it boldly when duty calls?

78. "Wherever ye are, death will find you out, even if ye are in towers built up strong and high!" If some good befalls them, they say, "This is from Allah.; but if evil, they say, "This is from thee" (O Prophet).(597) Say: "All things are from Allah." But what hath come to these people, that they fail to understand a single fact?

597 The Hypocrites were inconsistent, and in this reflect unregenerate mankind. If a disaster happens, due to their own folly, they blame somebody else; but if they are fortunate, they claim reflected credit by pretending that Heaven has favoured them because of their own superior merits. The modern critic discards even this pretence, eliminates Heaven altogether, and claims all credit direct to himself, unless he brings in blind chance, but that he does mostly to "explain" misfortune. If we look to the Ultimate Cause of all things, all things come from Allah. But if we look to the proximate cause of things, our own merit is so small, that we can hardly claim credit for good ourselves with any fairness. In Allah's hand is all good: 3:26- On the other hand, the proximate cause of our evil is due to some wrong in our own inner selves; for never are we dealt with unjustly in the very least: 4:77.

79. Whatever good, (O man!) happens to thee, is from Allah. but whatever evil happens to thee, is from thy (own) soul. and We have sent thee as a Messenger(598) to (instruct) mankind. And enough is Allah for a witness.

598 To blame a man of God for our misfortunes is doubly unjust. For he comes to save us from misfortune, and it is because we flout him or pay no heed to him, that our own rebellion, brings its own punishment. If we realise this truth we shall be saved from two sins: (1) the sin of injustice to Allah's Messengers, who come for our good, and not for our harm; (2) the sin of not realising our own shortcomings or rebellion, and thus living in spiritual darkness. If the message is from Allah, that carries its own authority: "enough is Allah for a witness."

80. He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah. But if any turn away, We have not sent thee to watch over their (evil deeds).(599)

599 The Messenger was sent to preach, guide, instruct, and show the Way-not to dive people to good. That is not Allah's Plan, which trains the human will. The Messenger's duty is therefore to convey the Message of Allah, in all the ways of persuasion that are open to him. If men perversely disobey that Message, they are not disobeying him but they are disobeying Allah. In the same way those who obey the Message are obeying Allah. They are not obliging the Messenger; they are merely doing their duty.

81. They have "Obedience" on their lips; but when they leave thee, a section of them Meditate all night on things very different from what thou tellest them. But Allah records their nightly (plots): So keep clear of them, and put thy trust in Allah, and enough is Allah as a disposer of affairs.(600)

600 If we trust people who are not true, they are more likely to hinder than to help. But Allah is All-Good as well as All-Powerful, and all our affairs are best entrusted to His care. He is the best Guardian of all interests.

Therefore we should not trust the lip professions of hypocrites, but trust in Allah. Nor should our confidence in Allah be shaken by any secret plots that enemies hatch against us. We should take all human precautions against them, but having done so, we should put our trust in Allah, Who knows the inner working of events better than any human mind can conceive.

82. Do they not consider the Qur´an (with care)? Had it been from other Than Allah, they would surely have found therein Much discrepancy.(601)

601 The unity of the Qur'an is admittedly greater than that of any other sacred book. And yet how can we account for it except through the unity of Allah's purpose and design? From a mere human point of view, we should have expected much discrepancy, because (1) the Messenger who promulgated it was not a learned man or philosopher, (2) it was promulgated at various times and in various circumstances, and (3) it is addressed to all grades of mankind. Yet, when properly understood, its various pieces fit together better than a jig-saw puzzle even when arranged without any regard to chronological order. There was just the One Inspirer and the One Inspired.

83. When there comes to them some matter touching (Public) safety or fear, they divulge it. If they had only referred it to the Messenger, or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have Tested it from them (direct). Were it not for the Grace and Mercy of Allah unto you, all but a few of you would have fallen into the clutches of Satan.(602)

602 In times of war or public panic, thoughtless repetition of gossip is rightly restrained by all effective States. If false, such news may cause needless alarm: if true, it may frighten the timid and cause some misgiving even to the bravest, because the counterpart of it-the preparations made to meet the danger-is not known. Thoughtless news, true or false, may also encourage the enemy. The proper course is quietly to hand all news direct to those who are in a position to investigate it. They can then sift it and take suitable measures to checkmate the enemy. Not to do so, but to deal with news either thoughtlessly or maliciously, is to fall directly into the snares of Evil.

84. Then fight in Allah's cause - Thou art held responsible only for thyself - and rouse the believers. It may be that Allah will restrain the fury of the Unbelievers; for Allah is the strongest in might and in punishment.(603)

603 The courage of Muhammad was as notable as his wisdom, his gentleness, and his trust in Allah. Facing fearful odds, he often stood alone, and took the whole responsibility on himself. But his example and visible trust in Allah inspired and roused the Muslims, and also-speaking purely from a human point of view-res trained the fury of his enemies. When we consider that he was Allah's inspired Messenger to carry out His Plan, we can see that nothing can resist that Plan. If the enemy happens to have strength, power, or resources, Allah's strength, power, and resources are infinitely greater. If the enemy is meditating punishment on the righteous for their righteousness, Allah's punishment for such wickedness will be infinitely greater and more effective.

85. Whoever recommends and helps a good cause becomes a partner therein: And whoever recommends and helps an evil cause, shares in its burden: And Allah hath power(604) over all things.

604 In this fleeting world's chances, Allah's providence and justice may not always appear plain to our eyes. But we are asked to believe that if we help and support a good cause, we share in all its credit and in its eventual victory. And conversely, we cannot support a bad cause without sharing in all its evil consequences. If appearances seem against this faith, let us not be deceived by appearances. For Allah has power over all things.

86. When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy. Allah takes careful account(605) of all things.

605 The necessary correlative to the command to fight in a good cause is the command to cultivate sweetness and cordiality in our manners at all times. For righting is an exceptional necessity while the sweetness of daily human intercourse

is a normal need. Further, we give kindness and courtesy without asking, and return it if possible in even better terms than we received, or at least in equally courteous terms. For we are all creatures of One God, and shall be brought together before Him.

87. Allah. There is no god but He: of a surety He will gather you together against the Day of Judgment, about which there is no doubt. And whose word can be truer than Allah.s?

88. Why should ye be divided into two parties about the Hypocrites?(606) Allah hath upset them for their (evil) deeds. Would ye guide those whom Allah hath thrown out of the Way? For those whom Allah hath thrown out of the Way, never shalt thou find the Way.

606 When the desertion of the hypocrites at Uhud nearly caused a disaster to the Muslim cause there was great feeling among the Muslims of Madinah against them. One party wanted to put them to the sword: another to leave them alone. The actual policy pursued avoided both extremes, and was determined by these verses. It was clear that they were a danger to the Muslim, community if they were admitted into its counsels, and in any case they were a source of demoralisation. But while every caution was used, no extreme measures were taken against them. On the contrary, they were given a chance of making good. If they made a sacrifice for the cause ("flee from what is forbidden," see next verse), their conduct purged their previous cowardice, and their sincerity entitled them to be taken back. But if they deserted the Muslim community again, they were treated as enemies, with the additional penalty of desertion which is enforced by all nations actually at war. Even so, a humane exception was made in the two cases specified in 4:90.

89. They but wish that ye should reject Faith, as they do, and thus be on the same footing (as they): But take not friends from their ranks until they flee(607) in the way of Allah (From what is forbidden). But if they turn renegades, seize them and slay them wherever ye find them; and (in any case) take no friends or helpers from their ranks;-

607 *Flee:* the verbal form from which the noun *hijrah* is derived. Bukhari interprets this rightly as fleeing from all that is forbidden. This would include *hijrah* in the technical sense of leaving a place in which the practice of religion is not allowed. But it is more general, in time of war, if a man is willing to submit to discipline and refrains from infringing orders issued, he has proved his fidelity and may be treated as a member of the community at war. On the other hand, if he by false pretences comes into the inner counsels merely to betray them, he may rightly be treated as a traitor or deserter and be punished for his treason or desertion; or if he escapes, he can be treated as an enemy and is entitled to no mercy. He is worse than an enemy; he has claimed to be one of you in order to spy on you, and been all the time helping the enemy.

90. Except those who join a group between whom and you there is a treaty(608) (Of peace), or those who approach(609) you with hearts restraining them from fighting you as well as fighting their own people. If Allah had pleased, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you: Therefore if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (Guarantees of) peace, then Allah Hath opened no way for you (to war against them).

608 *Except* the exception refers to "seize them and slay them", the death penalty for repeated desertion. Even after such desertion, exemption is granted in two cases. One is where the deserter took asylum with a tribe with whom there was a treaty of peace and amity. Presumably such a tribe (even though outside the pale of Islam) might be trusted to keep the man from fighting against the forces of Islam-in the modern phrase, to disarm him and render him harmless. The second case for exemption is where the man from his own heart desires never to take up arms against Islam, though he does not wish to join the forces of Islam, to fight against a hostile tribe (perhaps his own) fighting against Islam. But he must make a real approach, giving guarantees of his sincerity. In the modern phase he would be "on parole". But this provision is much milder than that in modern military codes, which grant the privilege only to enemy prisoners, not to those who have deserted from the army granting them parole. The hypocrites were in that position, but humanity as well as policy treated them with great leniency.

609 *Approach* or come: refers not to the physical act of coming, but to the mental attitude; the heart is mentioned for sincerity. When they sincerely promise not to fight against you, do not pursue them. Remember that if they had fought against you, your difficulties would have been increased. Their neutrality itself may be a great advantage to you. So long as you are satisfied that they are sincere and their acts support their declarations of peace with you, you should not consider yourself justifed in pursuing them and warring against them.

91. Others you will find that wish to gain your confidence as well as that of their people: Every time they are sent back(610) to temptation, they succumb thereto: if they withdraw not from you nor give you (guarantees) of peace besides restraining their hands, seize them and slay them wherever ye get them: In their case We have provided you with a clear argument against them.

610 As opposed to the two classes of deserters to whom clemency may be shown, there is a class which is treacherous and dangerous and cannot be left alone. They try to win your confidence, and are all the time in the confidence of the enemy. Every time they get a chance, they succumb to the temptation of double-dealing. The best way of dealing with them is to treat them as open enemies. Keep them not in your midst. If they give you guarantees of peace and do not actually fight against you, well and good. If not, they are deserters actively fighting in the ranks of the enemy. They have openly given you proof, and you can fairly seize and slay them in war as deserters and enemies.

92. Never should a believer kill a believer; but (If it so happens) by mistake,(611) (Compensation is due): If one (so) kills a believer, it is ordained that he should free a believing slave, and pay compensation to the deceased´s family, unless they remit it freely. If the deceased belonged to a people at war with you, and he was a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (Is enough). If he belonged to a people with whom ye have treaty of Mutual alliance, compensation should be paid to his family, and a believing slave be freed. For those who find this beyond their means, (is prescribed) a fast for two months running: by way of repentance to Allah. for Allah hath all knowledge and all wisdom.

611 Life is absolutely sacred in the Islamic Brotherhood. But mistakes will sometimes happen, as did happen in the melee at Uhud, when some Muslims were killed (being mistaken for the enemy) by Muslims. There was no guilty intention: therefore there was no murder. But all the same, the family of the deceased was entitled to compensation unless they freely remitted it, and in addition it was provided that the unfortunate man who made the mistake should free a believing slave. Thus a deplorable mistake was made the occasion for winning the liberty of a slave who was a Believer, for Islam discountenances slavery. The compensation could only be paid if the deceased belonged to a Muslim society or to some people at peace with the Muslim society. Obviously it could not be paid if, though the deceased was a Believer, his people were at war with the Muslim society; even if his people could be reached, it is not fair to increase the resources of the enemy. If the deceased was himself an enemy at war, obviously the laws of war justify his being killed in warfare unless he surrendered. If the man who took life unintentionally has no means from which to free a believing slave or to give compensation, he must still by an act of strict self-denial (fasting for two whole months running) show that he is cognizant of the grave nature of the deed he has done and sincerely repentant I take this to apply to all three cases mentioned: that is, where a Believer killed a Believer unintentionally and the deceased (1} belonged to the same community as you, or (2) belonged to a community at war with you, or (5) belonged to a community in alliance with you.

93. If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense(612) is Hell, to abide therein (For ever): And the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him.

612 What is mentioned here is the punishment in the Hereafter, the spiritual consequences. The legal consequences, enforceable by human society, are mentioned in 2:178, under the rules of *Qisas.* That is, a life should be taken for a life destroyed, but this should be on a scale of equality: a single murder should not commit a whole tribe to a perpetual blood-feud, as in the days of ignorance. But if the heirs of the man slain accept reasonable compensation, this should be accepted, and the taking of a life for a life should be put a stop to. This course leads to the saving of life, and is commanded to men of understanding.

94. O ye who believe! When ye go abroad(613) in the cause of Allah, investigate carefully, and say not to any one who offers you a salutation: "Thou art none of a believer!" Coveting the perishable goods of this life: with Allah are profits and spoils abundant. Even thus were ye yourselves before, till Allah conferred on you His favours: Therefore carefully investigate. For Allah is well aware of all that ye do.

613 *Go abroad: daraba-to* travel, to go abroad, either for jihad, or for honest trade or other service, which if done with pure motives, counts as service in the cause of Allah. The immediate occasion was in connection with *jihad,* but the words are general, and can be applied to all circumstances in which a man fells through spiritual pride: he thinks he is not as other men are, but forgets that, but for the grace of Allah, he is himself a sinner! In war (or in peace) we are apt to catch some worldly advantage by pluming ourselves on our superiority in Faith. In war perhaps we want to gain glory or booty by killing a supposed enemy! In peace we make light of other people in order to steal some advantage or material gain! This is wrong. The righteous man, if he is really out in Allah's service, has more abundant and richer gifts to think of in the spiritual world.

95. Not equal are those believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah with their goods and their persons. Allah hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home). Unto all (in Faith)(614) Hath Allah promised good: But those who strive and fight Hath He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward,-

614 Allah's goodness is promised to all people of Faith. But there are degrees among men and women of Faith. There are people with natural inertia: they do the minimum that is required of them, but no more. There are people who are weak in will: they are easily frightened. There are people who are so strong in will and so firm in faith that they are determined to conquer every obstacle, whether in their own physical or other infirmities or in the external world around them. In a time of jihad, when people give their all, and even their lives, for the common cause, they must be accounted more glorious than those who sit at home, even though they have goodwill to the cause and carry out minor duties in aid. The special reward of such self-sacrifice is high spiritual rank, and special forgiveness and mercy, as proceeding from the direct approbation and love of Allah.

96. Ranks specially bestowed by Him, and Forgiveness and Mercy. For Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

97. When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls,(615) they say: "In what (plight) Were ye?" They reply: "Weak and oppressed Were we in the earth." They say: "Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (From evil)?" Such men will find their abode in Hell,- What an evil refuge! -

615 The immediate occasion for this passage was the question of migration *(hijrah)* from places where Islam was being persecuted and suppressed. Obviously the duty of Muslims was to leave such places, even if it involved forsaking their homes, and join and strengthen the Muslim community among whom they could live in peace and with whom they could help in fighting the evils around them. But the meaning is wider. Islam does not say: "Resist not evil." On the contrary it requires a constant, unceasing struggle against evil. For such struggle it may be necessary to forsake home and unite and organise and join our brethren in assaulting and overthrowing the fortress of evil. For the Muslim's duty is not only to enjoin good but to prohibit evil. To make our assault we must be prepared to put ourselves in a position from which such assault would be possible, and Allah's earth is spacious enough for the purpose. "Position" includes not only local position, but moral and material position. For example, we must shun evil company where we cannot put it down, but organize a position from which we can put it down.

98. Except those who are (really) weak and oppressed - men, women, and children - who have no means in their power, nor (a guide-post)(616) to their way.

616 If through physical, mental, or moral incapacity, we are unable to fight the good fight, we must nevertheless guard ourselves from it. Allah's gracious Mercy will recognise and forgive our weakness if it is real weakness, and not merely an excuse. (R).

99. For these, there is hope that Allah will forgive: For Allah doth blot out (sins) and forgive again and again.

100. He who forsakes his home in the cause of Allah, finds in the earth Many a refuge, wide and spacious: Should he die as a refugee from home for Allah and His Messenger, His reward becomes due and sure with Allah. And Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

101. When ye travel through the earth, there is no blame on you if ye shorten your prayers,(617) for fear the Unbelievers May attack you: For the Unbelievers are unto you open enemies.

617 Verse 101 gives permission to shorten congregational prayers when people are on a journey: verses 102-104 deal with cases when they are in danger at war, in face of the enemy. The shortening of congregational prayers in both cases is further governed as to details by the practice of the Messenger and his companions. As to journeys, two questions arise: (1) what constitutes a journey for this purpose? (2) is the fear of an attack an essential condition for the shortening of the congregational prayers? As to (1), it is best to leave the matter to discretion, having regard to all the circumstances of the journey, as in the case of the journeys which excuse a fast see 2:184, n. 190. The text leaves it to discretion. As to (2), the practice of the Prophet shows that danger is not an essential condition: it is merely mentioned as a possible incident. The Messenger usually shortened the prayers from four *Rak'ahs* to two *Rak'ahs* in *Zuhr* (midday prayer). *(Asr* (afternoon prayer) and *'Isha'* (night prayer): the other two are in any case short, *Fajr* (morning prayer) having two *Rak'ahs* and *Maghrib* (evening prayer) having three. (R).

102. When thou (O Messenger. art with them, and standest to lead them in prayer, Let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with thee, Taking their arms with them: When they finish their prostrations, let them Take their position in the rear. And let the other party come up which hath not yet prayed - and let them pray with thee, Taking all precaution, and bearing arms: the Unbelievers wish, if ye were negligent of your arms and your baggage, to assault you in a single rush.(618) But there is no blame on you if ye put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because ye are ill; but take (every) precaution for yourselves. For the Unbelievers Allah hath prepared a humiliating punishment.

618 The congregational prayer in danger in face of the enemy rests on the principle that the congregation should be divided into two parties; one party prays while the other watches the enemy, and then the second party comes up to prayers while the first falls back to face the enemy; either party does only one or two Rak'ahs, or about half the congregational prayer; every precaution is taken to prevent a rush by the enemy; even while at prayers armour and arms need not be put off except when rain is likely to cause inconvenience to the wearer and damage to the arms, or when illness or fatigue causes the wearer's strength to fail. Details can he varied according to circumstances, as was actually done by the Prophet at different times.

103. When ye pass(619) (Congregational) prayers, celebrate Allah.s praises, standing, sitting down, or lying down on your sides; but when ye are free from danger, set up Regular Prayers: For such prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times.

619 Two interpretations are possible: (1) "when ye have finished congregational prayers", or (2) "when (on account of extreme danger) ye have to pass over congregational prayers altogether-even the shorter form indicated for times of danger." I prefer the latter, as it accords better with the following sentence, which allows you to remember Allah individually in any posture possible during the danger. But when the danger is past, the full prayers should be offered at the stated times.

104. And slacken not in following up the enemy: If ye are suffering hardships, they are suffering similar hardships; but ye have Hope from Allah, while

they(620) have none. And Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

620 Religion should be a source of strength and not of weakness in all our affairs. If we have to struggle hard and suffer hardships, those without faith have to do the same, with this difference, that the man of Faith is full of hope in Allah, whereas the man without faith has nothing to sustain him.

105. We have sent down to thee the Book in truth, that thou mightest judge between men, as guided by Allah. so be not (used) as an advocate by those who betray their crust;(621)

621 The Commentators explain this passage with reference to the case of Ta'imah ibn Ubayraq, who was nominally a Muslim but really a hypocrite, and given to all sorts of wicked deeds. He was suspected of having stolen a set of armour, and when the trail was hot, he planted the stolen property in the house of a Jew, where it was found. The Jew denied the charge and accused Ta'imah, but the sympathies of the Muslim community were with Ta'imah on account of his nominal profession of Islam. The case was brought to the Prophet, who acquitted the Jew according to the strict principle of justice, as "guided by Allah". Attempts were made to prejudice him and deceive him into using his authority to favour Ta'imah. When Ta'imah realized that his punishment was imminent he fled and turned apostate. (R).

The general lesson is that the righteous man is faced with all sorts of subtle wiles: the wicked will try to appeal to his highest sympathies and most honourable motives to deceive him and use him as an instrument for defeating justice. He should be careful and cautious, and seek the help of Allah for protection against deception and for firmness in dealing the strictest justice without fear or favour. To do otherwise is to betray a sacred trust; the trustee must defeat all attempts made to mislead him.

106. But seek the forgiveness of Allah. for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

107. Contend not on behalf of such as betray their own souls;(622) for Allah loveth not one given to perfidy and crime:

622 Our souls are a sort of trust with us. We have to guard them against all temptation. Those who surrender to crime or evil, betray that trust. We are warned against being deceived into taking their part, induced either by plausible appearances, or by such incentives to partiality as that they belong to our own people or that some link connects them with us, whereas when we are out to do justice, we must not allow any irrelevant considerations to sway us.

108. They may hide (Their crimes) from men, but they cannot hide (Them) from Allah, seeing that He is in their midst when they plot by night, in words that He cannot approve: And Allah Doth compass round(623) all that they do.

623 The plots of sinners are known fully to Allah, and He can fully circumvent them if necessary, according to the fullness of His wisdom. The words used are: *Compass them round: muhit:* not only does Allah know all about it, but He is all round it: if in His wisdom He allows it, it is not because He has not complete control over it, but because, having it as it were enclosed in a complete circle, He can use it to further His own Plan. Even out of evil He can bring good. *(Cf.* 4:126).

109. Ah! These are the sort of men on whose behalf ye may contend in this world; but who will contend with Allah on their behalf on the Day of Judgment, or who will carry their affairs through?

110. If any one does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks Allah.s forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

111. And if any one earns(624) sin. he earns it against His own soul: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

624 *Kasaba-to* earn, to gain, to work for something valuable, to lay up a provision for the future life. We do a day's labor to earn our livelihood; so in a spiritual sense, whatever good or evil we do in this life, earns us good or evil in the life to come. Inverses 110-112 three cases are considered: (1) if we do ill, and repent. Allah will forgive: (2) if we do ill and do not repent, thinking that we can hide it, we are wrong; nothing is hidden from Allah, and we shall suffer the full consequences in the life to come, for we can never evade our personal responsibility: (3) if we do ill, great or small, and impute it to another, our original responsibility for the ill remains, but we add to it something else; for we tie round our necks the guilt of falsehood, which converts even our minor fault into a great sin, and in any case brands us even in this life with shame and ignominy.

112. But if any one earns a fault or a sin and throws it on to one that is innocent, He carries (on himself) (Both) a falsehood and a flagrant sin.

113. But for the Grace of Allah to thee and his Mercy, a party of them would certainly have plotted to lead thee astray. But (in fact) they will only Lead their own souls astray, and to thee they can do no harm in the least. For Allah hath sent down to thee the Book and wisdom and taught thee what thou Knewest not (before): And great is the Grace of Allah unto thee.

114. In most of their secret talks there is no good: But if one exhorts to a deed of charity or justice or conciliation between men,(625) (Secrecy is permissible): To him who does this, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, We shall soon give a reward of the highest (value).

625 Usually secrecy is for evil ends, or from questionable motives, or because the person seeking secrecy is ashamed of himself and knows that if his acts or motives became known, he would make himself odious. Islam therefore disapproves of secrecy and loves and enjoins openness in all consultations and doings. But there are three things in which secrecy is permissible, and indeed laudable, provided the motive be purely unselfish, to earn "the good pleasure of Allah": (1) If you are doing a deed of charity or beneficence, whether in giving material things or in helping in moral, intellectual, or spiritual matters; here publicity may not be agreeable to the recipient of your beneficence, and you have to think of his feelings; (2) where an unpleasant act of justice or correction has to be done; this should be done, but there is no virtue in publishing it abroad and causing humiliation to some parties or adding to their humiliation by publicity; (3) where there is a delicate question of conciliating parties to a quarrel; they may be very touchy about publicity but quite amenable to the influence of a man acting in private.

115. If anyone contends with the Messenger even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that becoming to men of Faith, We shall leave him in the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell,- what an evil refuge!

116. Allah forgiveth not (The sin of) joining other gods(626) with Him; but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this: one who joins other gods with Allah, Hath strayed far, far away (from the right).

626 *Cf.* 4:48 and n. 569. Blasphemy in the spiritual kingdom is like treason in the political kingdom.

117. (The Pagans), leaving Him, call but upon female deities:(627) They call but upon satan the persistent rebel!

627 The unity, power, and goodness of Allah are so manifest in nature and in the human mind when it is in accord with the universal spirit, that only the most abject perversion can account for the sin of spiritual treason. That sin arises from perverted ideas of sex or perverted ideas of self. The perversion of sex is to suppose that sex rules in spiritual matters. From it arise such horrible creations of the imagination as Kali, the bloodthirsty goddess of Hindus, or Hecate, the goddess of revenge and hate in Greek mythology. Even in beautiful forms like Saraswati (the goddess of learning) or Minerva (the virgin goddess of sport and arts), to say nothing of Venus (the goddess of carnal pleasures), the emphasis laid on sex destroys a right view of spiritual nature. Perverted ideas of self are typified in the story of Satan, who was so puffed up with arrogance that he disobeyed Allah, and Allah cursed him. Both these perversions, if allowed lodgment, completely ruin our spiritual nature and deface Allah's handiwork. Hence it is not merely an outer sin but one that corrupts us through and through.

118. Allah did curse him, but he said: "I will take of Thy servants a portion(628) Marked off;

628 Satan obtained Allah's permission to tempt man, and this was implied in such free will as was granted to man by Allah. Satan's boast is that the portion of mankind seduced by him will be so corrupted in their nature that they will bear a sort of brand that will mark them off as his own; or that they will be like a portion assigned to himself.

119. "I will mislead them,(629) and I will create in them false desires; I will order them to slit the ears(630) of cattle, and to deface the (fair) nature created(631) by Allah." Whoever, forsaking Allah, takes satan for a friend, hath of a surety suffered a loss that is manifest.

629 Satan's deceptions are with false desires, false superstitions, and false fears.

630 Slitting the ears of cattle is just one instance of the superstitions to which men become slaves when they run after false gods. Astrology, magic, and vain beliefs in things that do not exist lead men away from Allah, the one true God. (R).

631 To deface the (fair) nature created by Allah: there is both a physical and a spiritual meaning. We see many kinds of defacements practiced on men and animals, against their true nature as created by Allah, partly on account of superstition, partly on account of selfishness. Spiritually the case is even worse. How many natures are dwarfed or starved and turned from their original instincts by cruel superstitions or customs? Allah created man pure: the Evil One defaces the image.

120. Satan makes them promises, and creates in them false desires; but satan´s promises are nothing but deception.

121. They (his dupes) will have their dwelling in Hell, and from it they will find no way of escape.

122. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness,- we shall soon admit them to gardens, with rivers flowing beneath,-to dwell therein for ever. Allah.s promise is the truth, and whose word can be truer than Allah.s?

123. Not your desires, nor those(632) of the People of the Book (can prevail): whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find, besides Allah, any protector or helper.

632 Personal responsibility is again and again insisted on as the keynote of Islam. In this are implied faith and right conduct. Faith is not an external thing; it begins with an act of will, but if true and sincere, it affects the whole being, and leads to right conduct. In this it is distinguished from the kind of faith which promises salvation because someone else in whom you are asked to believe has borne away the sins of men, or the kind of faith which says that because you are born of a certain race ("Children of Abraham") or a certain caste, you are privileged, and your conduct will be judged by a different standard from that of other men. Whatever you are, if you do evil, you must suffer the consequences, unless Allah's Mercy comes to your help.

124. If any do deeds of righteousness,- be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice(633) will be done to them.

633 *Naqir=the* groove in a date stone, a thing of no value whatever, *(Cf.* n. 575 to 4:53 and 35:13).

125. Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in Faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend.(634)

634 Abraham is distinguished in Muslim theology with the title of "Friend of Allah". This does not of course mean that he was anything more than a mortal. But his faith was pure and true, and his conduct was firm and righteous in all circumstances. He was the fountainhead of the present monotheistic tradition, the Patriarch of the prophetic line, and is revered alike by Jews, Christians and Muslims. (R).

126. But to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth: And He it is that Encompasseth all things.(635)

635 *Muhit. Cf.* 4:108, and n. 623.

127. They ask thy instruction concerning the women say: Allah doth instruct you about them: And (remember) what hath been rehearsed unto you(636) in the Book, concerning the orphans of women to whom ye give not the portions prescribed, and yet whom ye desire to marry, as also concerning the children who are weak and oppressed;(637) that ye stand firm for justice to orphans. There is not a good deed which ye do, but Allah is well-acquainted therewith.

636 Again and again is it impressed on the community of Islam to be just in their dealings with women, orphans, children, and all whose weakness requires special consideration. The law about widows and orphans, inheritance, dower, and marriage had already been declared in 4:2-35, and further instructions are now given on a further reference. The words translated *orphans of women* mean, I think, the orphaned children of widows, of whom there were several after the battle of Uhud, and whom it was the duty of the community to provide for. But some Commentators take them to mean "female orphans." In any case, because women were orphans or widows, it was not right that anyone should take advantage of their helpless position to deprive them of dower or of their portion in inheritance.

637 *Cf.* 4:75, n. 592.

Both widows and orphans are to be helped because they are ordinarily weak, ill-treated, and oppressed. In communities which base their civil rights on brute strength, the weaker go to the wall, and public opinion expects nothing else. In Nietzsche's philosophy of the Superman that doctrine is stressed strongly, and some of the militarist nations in our own time seem inclined to support this reversion to our primitive instincts. Even in modern democracies of the saner sort, we are often told that it is the fate of minorities to suffer: strength of numbers here becomes the passport to power and privilege. Islam, while upholding sane manly views in general, enjoins the most solicitous care for the weak and oppressed in every way-in rights of property, in social rights, and in the right to opportunities of development. Spiritual strength or weakness does not necessarily go with physical or numerical strength.

128. If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband´s part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best; even though men´s souls are swayed by greed.(638) But if ye do good and practise self-restraint, Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

638 To protect the woman's economic interests, various rules are prescribed for dower in marriage. But the sanctity of marriage itself is greater than any economic interests. Divorce is, of all things permitted, most hateful to Allah. Therefore if a breach between husband and wife can be prevented by some economic consideration, it is better to make that concession than to imperil the future of the wife, the children, and probably the husband also. Such concessions are permissible, in view of the love of wealth ingrained in unregenerate man, but a recommendation is made that we should practise self-restraint, and do what we can to come to an amicable settlement without any economic sacrifice on the part of the woman.

129. Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire: But turn not away (from a woman) altogether, so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air).(639) If ye come to a friendly understanding, and practise self- restraint, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

639 In this material world there are two principal causes of division between man and wife, money and "the other woman" or "the other man". Money was dealt with in the last verse. Here is the case of "the other woman". Legally more than one wife (up to four) are permissible on the condition that the man can be perfectly fair and just to all. But this is a condition almost impossible to fulfil. If, in the hope that he might be able to fulfil it, a man puts himself in that impossible position, it is only right to insist that he should not discard one but at least fulfil all the outward duties that are incumbent on him in respect of her.

130. But if they disagree (and must part), Allah will provide abundance for all from His all-reaching bounty: for Allah is He that careth for all and is Wise.

131. To Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth.(640) Verily we have directed the People of the Book before you, and you (o Muslims) to fear Allah. But if ye deny Him, lo! unto Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth, and Allah is free of all wants, worthy(641) of all praise.

640 Notice the refrain: "To Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth": repeated three times, each time with a new application. In the first instance it follows the statement of Allah's universal providence and love. If two persons, in spite of every sincere desire to love and comfort each other, fail to achieve that end, and have to separate, Allah's all-reaching bounty never fails, for He is the Lord of all things. In the second instance it is connected with Allah's Self-Existence, Self-Excellence, and independence of all creatures; all His commands are for our good, and they are given to all His creatures, according to their capacities. In the third instance, it is connected with His universal power; for He could destroy any individual or nation and create a new one without any loss to Himself; but He gives a chance to all again and again, and even rewards them beyond their own ambitions.

641 Allah's existence is absolute existence. It does not depend on any other person or any other thing. And it is worthy of all praise, for it is all-good and comprises every possible excellence. It is necessary to stress this point in order to show that the moral law for man is not a mere matter of transcendental commands, but really rests on the essential needs of mankind itself. If therefore such schools of thought as Behaviourisim proved their theories up to the hilt, they do not affect the position of Islam in the least. The highest ethical standards are enjoined by Islam, not as dogmatic imperatives, but because they can be shown to follow from the needs of man's nature and the results of man's experience.

132. Yea, unto Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth, and enough is Allah to carry through(642) all affairs.

642 This refers to the next verse. He does not need us, but we need Him. Our hopes, our happiness, our success centre in Him; but He is Self-sufficient. He has the power to supersede us, but His goodness is ever seeking to give us every chance in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

133. If it were His will, He could destroy you, o mankind, and create another race; for He hath power this to do.

134. If any one desires a reward in this life, in Allah.s (gift) is the reward (both) of this life and of the Hereafter;(643) for Allah is He that heareth and seeth (all things).

643 Man in this life can only see up to the horizon of this life. The highest rewards which his wishes or ambitions can conceive of are conceived in the terms of this life. But Allah can give him not only these but something infinitely higher—the rewards of the He re after-which it did not even enter his heart to ask for or his imagination to conceive.

135. O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses(644) to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor:(645) for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well- acquainted with all that ye do.

644 Justice is Allah's attribute, and to stand firm for justice is to be a witness to Allah, even if it is detrimental to our own interests (as we conceive them) or the interests of those who are near and dear to us. According to the Latin saying, "Let justice be done though heaven should fall."

But Islamic justice is something higher than the formal justice of Roman Law or any other human law. It is even more penetrative than the subtler justice in the speculations of the Greek philosophers. It searches out the innermost motives, because we are to act as in the presence of Allah, to whom all things, acts, and motives are known, (*Cf.* 5:8).

645 Some people may be inclined to favour the rich, because they expect something from them. Some people may be inclined to favour the poor because they are generally helpless. Partiality in either case is wrong. Be just, without fear or favour. Both the rich and the poor are under Allah's protection as far as their legitimate interests are concerned, but they cannot expect to be favoured at the expense of others. And He can protect their interests far better than any man.

136. O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and the scripture which He hath sent to His Messenger and the scripture which He sent to those before (him).(646) Any who denieth Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messenger., and the Day of Judgment, hath gone far, far astray.

646 If your belief is by habit or birth or the example of those you love or respect or admire, make that belief more specific and personal to yourself. We must not only have faith, but realise that faith in our inmost being. The chief objects of our Faith are Allah, His Messenger, and His Revelations. To all these we must give a home in our hearts. The angels we do not see and realise as we realise Allah, who is nearer to us than the vehicle of our life-blood, and the Day of Judgement is for our future experience, but we must not deny them, or we cut off a part of spiritual view.

137. Those who believe, then reject faith, then believe (again) and (again) reject faith, and go on increasing in unbelief,- Allah will not forgive them nor guide them nor guide them on the Way.(647)

647 Those who go on changing sides again and again can have no real Faith at any time. Their motives are mere worldly double-dealing. How can they expect Allah's grace or forgiveness? Here is a clear warning against those who make their religion a mere matter of worldly convenience. True religion goes far deeper. It transforms the very nature of man. After that transformation it is as impossible for him to change as it is for light to become darkness.

138. To the Hypocrites give the glad tidings that there is for them (but) a grievous penalty-

139. Yea, to those who take for friends unbelievers rather than believers: is it honour they seek among them? Nay,- all honour is with Allah.(648)

648 If the motive is some advantage, sonic honour— the fountain of all good is Allah. How can it really be expected from those who deny Faith? And if there is some show of worldly honour, what is it worth against the contempt they earn in the spiritual world?

140. Already has He sent you(649) Word in the Book, that when ye hear the signs of Allah held in defiance and ridicule, ye are not to sit with them unless they turn to a different theme: if ye did, ye would be like them. For Allah will collect the hypocrites and those who defy faith - all in Hell:-

649 *Cf.* 6:68, an earlier and Makkan verse. Where we see or hear Truth held in light esteem, we ought to make our protest and withdraw from such company, not out of arrogance, as if we thought ourselves superior to other people, but out of real humility, lest our own nature be corrupted in such society. But it is possible that our protest or our sincere remonstrance may change the theme of discourse. In that case we have done good to those who were inclined to hold Truth in light esteem, if we have saved them for ridiculing Truth.

141. (These are) the ones who wait and watch about you: if ye do gain a victory from Allah, they say: "Were we not with you?"- but if the unbelievers gain a success, they say (to them): "Did we not gain an advantage over you, and did we not guard you from the believers?" but Allah will judge betwixt you on the Day of Judgment. And never will Allah grant to the unbelievers a way (to triumphs) over the Believers.(650)

650 The methods and motives of Hypocrisy are thoroughly unmasked here. It has no principles, but watches for an opportunity to turn any event to its own advantage. If battle is joined between two inconsistent principles, it has no belief in either, but watches the result. There is unceasing fight between Good and Evil in this world. If the Good seems to win, the hypocrites range themselves on its side

with unctuous words, taking a great part of the credit to themselves. Perhaps the balance tips the other way later, and they have to make their peace with Evil. "Oh!" they say, we were in the ranks of your enemy before, on purpose to protect you when they were too strong for you!" This may suit the ways of the world. But the day of their account will come eventually. For the Good must ultimately triumph.

142. The Hypocrites - they think they are over-reaching Allah, but He will over- reach them: When they stand up to prayer, they stand without earnestness, to be seen of men, but little do they hold Allah in remembrance;

143. (They are) distracted in mind even in the midst of it,- being (sincerely) for neither one group nor for another whom Allah leaves straying,- never wilt thou find for him the Way.(651)

651 If we choose evil deliberately and double our guilt by fraud and deception, we do not deceive Allah, but we deceive ourselves. We deprive ourselves of the Grace of Allah, and are left straying away from the Path. In that condition who can guide us or show us the Way? Our true and right instincts become blunted; our fraud makes us unstable in character; when our fellow-men find out our fraud, any advantages we may have gained by the fraud are lost; and we become truly distracted in mind.

144. O ye who believe! Take not for friends unbelievers rather than believers: Do ye wish to offer Allah an open proof against yourselves?

145. The Hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire: no helper wilt thou find for them;-

146. Except for those who repent, mend (their lives) hold fast to Allah, and purify their religion as in Allah.s sight: if so they will be (numbered)(652) with the believers. And soon will Allah grant to the believers a reward of immense value.

652 Even Hypocrites can obtain forgiveness, on four conditions: (1) sincere repentance, which purifies their mind; (2) amendment of their conduct, which purifies their outer life; (3) steadfastness and devotion to Allah, which strengthens their faith and protects them from the assaults of evil; and (4) sincerity in their religion, or their whole inner being, which brings them as full members into the goodly Fellowship of Faith.

147. What can Allah gain by your punishment, if ye are grateful and ye believe? Nay, it is Allah that recogniseth(653) (all good), and knoweth all things.

653 There is no pleasure nor advantage to Allah in punishing His own creatures, over whom He watches with loving care. On the contrary He recognises any good-however little-which He finds in us, and delights to give us a reward beyond all measure. His recognition of us is compared by a bold metaphor to our gratitude to Him for His favours. The epithet *Shakir* is applied to Allah, as here, in 2:158, and other passages. In 16:121 it is applied to Abraham: "he showed his gratitude for the favours of Allah, who chose him and guided him to a Straight Way ."

148. Allah loveth not that evil should be noised abroad(654) in public speech, except where injustice hath been done; for Allah is He who heareth and knoweth all things.

654 We can make a public scandal of evil in many ways. (1) It may be idle sensation-mongering: it often leads to more evil by imitation, as where criminal deeds are glorified in a cinema, or talked about shamelessly in a novel or drama. (2) It may be malicious gossip of a foolish, personal kind: it does no good, but it hurts people's feelings. (3) It may be malevolent slander or libel: it is intended deliberately to cause harm to people's reputation or injure them in other ways, and is rightly punishable under all laws. (4) It may be a public rebuke or correction or remonstrance, without malice. (1), (2) and (3) are absolutely forbidden. (4) may be by a person in authority; in which case the exception applies, for all wrong or injustice must be corrected openly, to prevent its recurrence. Or (4) may be by a person not vested with authority, but acting either from motives of public spirit, or in order to help some one who has been wronged; here again the exception will apply. But if the motive is different, the exception does not apply. (4) would also include a public complaint by a person who has suffered a wrong; he has every right to seek public redress.

149. Whether ye publish a good deed or conceal it or cover evil with pardon, verily Allah doth blot out (sins) and hath power (in the judgment of values).(655)

655 *Qadir: I* have translated it more fully than most translators. The root *qadara* not only implies power, ability, strength, but two other ideas which it is difficult to convey in a single word, *viz.,* the act and power of estimating the true value of a thing or persons, as in 6:91; and the act and power of regulating something so as to bring it into correspondence with something. 'Judgement of values" I think sums up these finer shades of meaning. Allah forgives what is wrong and is able to fully appreciate and judge the value of our good deeds whether we publish them or conceal them.

150. Those who deny Allah and His messengers, and (those who) wish to separate Allah from His messengers, saying: "We believe in some but reject others": And (those who) wish to take a course midway,-(656)

656 Unbelief takes various forms. Three are mentioned here: (1) denial of Allah and His revelation to mankind through inspired men; (2) a sort of nominal belief in Allah and His Prophets, but one which is partial, and mixed up with racial pride, which does not allow for the recognition of any Messengers beyond those of a particular race; and (3) a nominal belief in universal revelation, but so hedged around with peculiar doctrines of exclusive salvation, that it practically approaches to a denial of Allah's universal love for all mankind and all Creation. All three amount to Unbelief, for they rally deny Allah's universal love and care.

151. They are in truth (equally) unbelievers; and we have prepared for unbelievers a humiliating punishment.

152. To those who believe in Allah and His messengers and make no distinction between any of the messengers, we shall soon give their (due) rewards: for Allah is Oft- forgiving, Most Merciful.

153. The people of the Book ask thee to cause a book to descend to them from heaven: Indeed they asked Moses for an even greater (miracle), for they said: "Show us Allah in public,"(657) but they were dazed for their presumption, with thunder and lightning. Yet they worshipped the calf even after clear signs had come to them; even so we forgave them; and gave Moses manifest proofs of authority.

657 *Cf.* 2:55 , for the thunder and lightning which dazed those who were presumptuous enough to ask that they should see Allah face to face, and 2:51 and n. 66, for the worship of the golden calf. The lesson is that it is presumptuous on the part of man to judge of spiritual things in terms of material things, or to ask to see Allah with their material eyes when Allah is above material forms and is independent of time and space.

154. And for their covenant we raised over them (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai);(658) and (on another occasion) we said: "Enter the gate with humility"; and (once again) we commanded them: "Transgress not in the matter of the sabbath." And we took from them a solemn covenant.

658 In this verse there is a recapitulation of three salient incidents of Jewish refractoriness already referred to in the second Surah: *viz.,* (1) the Covenant under the towering height of Sinai, 2:63; (2) their arrogance where they were commanded humility in entering a town, 2:58; and (3) their transgression of the Sabbath, 2:65.b

155. (They have incurred divine(659) displeasure): In that they broke their covenant; that they rejected the signs of Allah. that they slew the Messengers in defiance(660) of right; that they said, "Our hearts are the wrappings(661) (which preserve Allah.s Word; We need no more)";- Nay, Allah hath set the seal on their hearts for their blasphemy, and little is it they believe;-

659 In verses 155, 156, 157, 160 (latter half), and 161 with parenthetical clauses including those in verses 158-159, and 160 (first half), there is a catalogue of the iniquities of which the Jews were guilty, and for these iniquities we must understand some such words as: "They are under divine displeasure." Each clause of the indictment I have indicated by prefixing the word "that."

660 *Cf.* 3:21 , and nn. 363 and 364.

661 *Cf.* 2:88, and n. 92, where the full meaning is explained.

Note the crescendo (heightening effect) in the argument. Their iniquities were: (1) that they broke their Covenant; (2) that they rejected Allah's guidance as conveyed in His signs; (3) that they killed Allah's Messengers and incurred a double guilt, *viz.,* that of murder and that of a deliberate defiance of Allah's law; and (4) that they imagined themselves arrogantly self-sufficient, which means a blasphemous closing of their hearts forever against the admission of Allah's grace. Then begins another series of iniquities from a different point of view. (1) that they rejected Faith; (2) that they made false charges against a saintly woman like Mary, who was chosen by Allah to be the mother of Jesus; (3) that they boasted of having killed Jesus when they were victims of their own self-hallucination; (4) that they hindered people from Allah's way; and (5) that by means of usury and fraud they oppressed their fellow-men.

156. That they rejected Faith; that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge;(662)

662 The false charge against Mar)' was that she was unchaste, *Cf.* 19:27 -28. Such a charge is bad enough to make against any woman, but to make it against Mary, the mother of Jesus, was to bring into ridicule Allah's power itself. Islam is specially strong in guarding the reputation of women. Slanderers of women are bound to bring four witnesses in support of their accusations, and if they fail to produce four witnesses, they are to be flogged with eighty stripes and debarred forever from being competent witness: 24:4.

157. That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah.;- but they killed him not, nor crucified him,(663) but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:-

663 The end of the life of Jesus on earth is as much involved in mystery as his birth, and indeed the greater part of his private life, except the three main years of his ministry. It is not profitable to discuss the many doubts and conjectures among the early Christian sects and among Muslim theologians.The Orthodox-Christian Churches make it a cardinal point of their doctrine that his life was taken on the Cross, that he died and was buried, that on the third day he rose in the body with his wounds intact, and walked about and conversed, and ate with his disciples, and was afterwards taken up bodily to heaven. This is necessary for the theological doctrine of blood sacrifice and vicarious atonement for sins, which is rejected by Islam. But some of the early Christian sects did not believe that Christ was killed on the Cross. The Basilidans believed that someone else was substituted for him. The Docetae held that Christ never had a real physical or natural body, but only an apparent or phantom body, and that his Crucifixion was only apparent, not real. The Marcionite Gospel (about A.C. 138) denied that Jesus was born, and merely said that he appeared in human form. The Gospel of St. Barnabas supported the theory of substitution on the Cross. The Qur'anic teaching is that Christ was not crucified nor killed by the Jews, notwithstanding certain apparent circumstances which produced that illusion in the minds of some of his enemies; that disputatious, doubts, and conjectures on such matters are vain; and that he was taken up to Allah (see 4:158 and 3:55).

158. Nay, Allah raised him up(664) unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise;-

664 There is difference of opinion as to the exact interpretation of this verse. The words are: The Jews did not kill Jesus, but Allah raised him up *(rafa'ahu)* to Himself. One school holds that Jesus did not die the usual human death, but still lives in the body in heaven, which is the generally accepted Muslim view. Another holds that he did die (5:117) but not when he was supposed to be crucified, and that his being "raised up" unto Allah means that instead of being disgraced as a malefactor, as the Jews intended, he was on the contrary honoured by Allah as His Messenger: (see 4:159). The same word *rafa'a* is used in association with honour in connection with al Mustafa in 94:4. (R).

159. And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death;(665) and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness(666) against them;-

665 *Before his death.* Interpreters are not agreed as to the exact meaning. Those who hold that Jesus did not die (see last note) refer the pronoun "his" to Jesus. They say that Jesus is still living in the body and that he will appear just before the Final Day, after the coming of the Mahdi, when the world will be purified of sin and unbelief. There will be a final death before the final Resurrection, but all will have believed before that final death. Others think that "his" is better referred to "none of the People of the Book", and that the emphatic form "must believe" *(layu'minanna)* denotes more a question of duty than of fact. (R).

666 *Cf.* 4:41 .

160. For the iniquity of the Jews We made unlawful for them(667) certain (foods) good and wholesome which had been lawful for them;- in that they hindered many from Allah.s Way;-

667 *Cf.* 6:146. The ceremonial law of the Jews forbade the eating of the flesh of the camel, rabbit and hare {Leviticus 11:4-6), and the fat of oxen, sheep, and goats (Leviticus 7:23), and was in other respects very strict.

161. That they took usury, though they were forbidden; and that they devoured men´s substance wrongfully;- we have prepared for those among them who reject faith a grievous punishment.

162. But those among them who are well-grounded in knowledge, and the believers, believe in what hath been revealed to thee and what was revealed before thee: And (especially) those who establish regular prayer and practise regular charity and believe in Allah and in the Last Day: To them shall We soon give a great reward.

163. We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers(668) after him: we sent inspiration to Abraham,(669) Isma´il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms.

668 First we have a general statement: that inspiration was sent to many Messengers, and the inspiration was of the same kind as that sent to the Prophet Muhammad, for Allah's Message is one. Note that what is spoken of here is Inspiration, not necessarily a Book. Every nation or group of people had a messenger: 10:47 . Some of these messengers have been mentioned by name in the Qur'an, and some not, *(Cf.* 4:164, 16:36 , and 35:24).

669 *Cf.* 2:136 and 3:84. The list here given is in three groups. (1) The first group, Abraham's family, is the same as in 2:136 (where see the note) and in 3:84. (2) Then we have the Prophets Jesus, Job and Jonah, who symbolise patience and perseverance. (3) Then we have Aaron the priest and Solomon the King, both great figures, but each subordinate to another primary figure, *viz.,* Moses (mentioned in the next verse) and David (mentioned at the end of this verse). David's distinction was the Psalms, which are still extant. Though their present form may possibly be different from the original and they do undoubtedly include Psalms not written by David, the collection contains much devotional poetry of a high order. *(Cf.* 21:105). (R).

164. Of some messengers We have already told thee the story; of others We have not;- and to Moses Allah spoke direct;-(670)

670 Allah spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai . Hence the title of Moses in Muslim theology: *Kalim Allah:* the one to whom Allah spoke, *(Cf.* 19:51). (R).

165. Messenger. who gave good news(671) as well as warning, that mankind, after (the coming) of the messengers, should have no plea against Allah. For Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

671 Every prophet proclaims Allah's goodness to the righteous and forgiveness to those who repent, (good news), and the Wrath to come for those who reject Faith and live in iniquity (warning). Their mission of warning is a prelude and complement to their mission of good news. No one can then say that he or she did not know.

166. But Allah beareth witness that what He hath sent unto thee He hath sent from His (own)

knowledge,(672) and the angels bear witness: But enough is Allah for a witness.

672 Inspiration, though it is clothed in human language, and shaped to the personality of the inspired one, proceeds from the knowledge of Allah. (R).

167. Those who reject Faith and keep off (men) from the way of Allah, have verily strayed far, far away from the Path.

168. Those who reject Faith and do wrong,- Allah will not forgive them nor guide them to any way-

169. Except the way of Hell, to dwell therein for ever. And this to Allah is easy.(673)

673 *Easy-not* in the sense that Allah takes any pleasure in any of His creatures going astray. The contrary is the case: for Allah's Grace recognises all good in us to such an extent that it is compared to gratitude in 4:147; see n. 653. We must understand *easy* in the sense that Allah is Supreme in knowledge and power; if any forces of rebellion foolishly think that they can evade punishment, they are mistaken. Punishment comes as a matter of course. It is not a matter of difficulty or exertion on the part of Allah.

170. O Mankind! The Messenger hath come to you in truth from Allah. believe in him: It is best for you.(674) But if ye reject Faith, to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth: And Allah is All-knowing, All-wise.

674 Allah's solicitude for us is for our own good, not because He gets any advantage from it. For He is independent of all things, and everything declares His glory and praise.

171. O People of the Book! Commit no excesses(675) in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His messengers. Say not "Trinity" : desist:(676) it will be better for you: for Allah is one Allah. Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.

675 Just as a foolish servant may go wrong by excess of zeal for his master, so in religion people's excesses may lead them to blasphemy or a spirit the very opposite of religion. The Jewish excesses in the direction of formalism, racialism, exclusiveness, and rejection of Christ Jesus have been denounced in many places. Here the Christian attitude is condemned, which raises Jesus to an equality with Allah; in some cases venerates Mary almost to idolatry; attributes a physical son to Allah; and invents the doctrine of the Trinity, opposed to all reason, which according to the Athanasian Creed, unless a man believes, he is doomed to hell forever. Let our Muslims also beware lest they fall into excesses either in doctrine or in formalism, *(Cf.* 11:110).

676 Christ's attributes are mentioned: (1) that he was the son of a woman, Mary, and therefore a man; (2) but a messenger, a man with a mission from Allah, and therefore entitled to honour; (3) a Word bestowed on Mary, for he was created by Allah's word "Be" *(kun),* and he was; 3:59; (4) a spirit proceeding from Allah, but not Allah: his life and his mission were more limited than in the case of some other Messengers, though we must pay equal honour to him as a Prophet of Allah. The doctrines of Trinity, equality with Allah, and sonship, are repudiated as blasphemies. Allah is independent of all needs and has no need of a son to manage His affairs. The Gospel of John (whoever wrote it) has put in a great deal of Alexandrian and Gnostic mysticism round the doctrine of the Word (Greek, Logos), but it is simply explained here. (R).

172. Christ disdaineth nor to serve and worship Allah,(677) nor do the angels, those nearest (to Allah.: those who disdain His worship and are arrogant,-He will gather them all together unto Himself(678) to (answer).

677 Christ often watched and prayed, as a humble worshipper of Allah; and his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane was full of human dignity, suffering, and self-humiliation (see Matt. xxvi. 36-45).

678 The disdainful and the arrogant are the crew of Satan, who will be gathered together before the Supreme Throne for punishment.

173. But to those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, He will give their (due) rewards,- and more, out of His bounty: But those who are disdainful and arrogant, He will punish with a grievous penalty; Nor will they find, besides Allah, any to protect or help them.

174. O mankind! verily there hath come to you a convincing proof from your Lord: For We have sent unto you a light (that is) manifest.(679)

679 The Proof and the Light are the Qur'an and the Personality, life and teaching of Muhammad Al Mustafa.

175. Then those who believe in Allah, and hold fast to Him,- soon will He admit them to mercy and grace from Himself,(680) and guide them to Himself by a straight way.

680 From Himself = From His Presence: see 3:195 and n. 501. The Mercy and Grace are expressed here as specially flowing from Him.

176. They ask thee for a legal decision. Say: Allah directs (thus) about those who leave no descendants or ascendants as heirs. If it is a man(681) that dies, leaving a sister but no child, she shall have half the inheritance: If (such a deceased was) a woman, who left no child, her brother takes her inheritance: If there are two sisters, they shall have two-thirds of the inheritance (Between them): if there are Brothers and sisters, (they share), The male having twice the share of the female. Thus doth Allah make clear to you (His claw), lest ye err. And Allah hath knowledge of all things.

681 This verse supplements the rule of inheritance of the estate of a deceased person who has left as heir neither a descendant nor an ascendant. We shall call such a person *A,* who may be either a male or a female. In 4:12 (second half). *A's* case was considered where he had left uterine brothers or sisters. Here *As case* is considered where he has left brothers and/or sisters by the father's side, whether the mother was the same or not. "Brothers" and "sisters" in this verse must be construed to be such brothers and sisters.

For the sake of clearness I have expanded the terse language of the original in the translation. Let me explain it more concretely in this note. *A,* and "brother" and "sister" being strictly defined as above, we proceed to consider how A *'s* inheritance would be divided. If A left a widow or widower, the widow's or widower's share would first be calculated as in the first half of 4:12 ; if A left no spouse, this calculation would not be necessary. Then if A left a single "sister," she would have a half share, the remaining half (insofar as it, or a part of it, does not fall to a spouse, if any) going to remoter heirs; if a single "brother," he would have the whole (subject to the spouse's right if there is a spouse); if more than one "brother," they divide the whole (subject to, etc.). If A left two or more "sisters," they get between them two-thirds, subject to the spouses right, if any. If A left a "brother" and 'sister," or "brothers," and "sisters," they divide on the basis that each "brother's" share is twice that of the "sister" (subject to, etc.). In all cases debts, funeral expenses, and legacies (to the amount allowed) have priority as in n. 522.

5. Al Ma'idah (The Repast)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. O ye who believe! fulfil (all) obligations.(682) Lawful unto you (for food) are all four-footed animals, with the exceptions named:(683) But animals of the chase are forbidden while ye are in the sacred precincts or in pilgrim garb:(684) for Allah doth command according to His will and plan.(685)

682 This line has been justly admired for its terseness and comprehensiveness. Obligations: *'uqud:* the Arabic word implies so many things that a whole chapter of Commentary can be written on it. First, there are the divine obligations that arise from our spiritual nature and our relation to Allah. He created us and implanted in us the faculty of knowledge and foresight; besides the intuition and reason which He gave us, He made Nature responsive to our needs, and His Signs in Nature are so many lessons to us in our own inner life; He further sent Messengers and Teachers, for the guidance of our conduct in individual, social, and public life. All these gifts create corresponding obligations which we must fulfil, *(Cf.* 30:30). But in our own human and material life we undertake mutual obligations express and implied. We make a promise; we enter into a commercial or social contract; we enter into a contract of marriage: we must faithfully fulfill all obligations in all these relationships, *(Cf.* 7:172 and 16:91). Our group of our State enters into a treaty: every individual in that group or State is bound to see that as far as lies in his power, such obligations are faithfully discharged. There are tacit obligations: living in civil society, we must respect its tacit conventions unless they are morally wrong, and in that case we must get out of such society. There are tacit obligations in the characters of host and guest, wayfarer or companion, employer or employed, etc., etc., which every man of Faith must discharge conscientiously. The man who deserts those who need him and goes to pray in a desert is a coward who disregards his obligations. All these obligations are inter-connected. Truth and fidelity are parts of religion in all relations of life.

683 That is, the exceptions named not only in the Qur'an but in the Sunnah as well. (See 5:3-4 below). (R).

684 *Cf.* 5:94-96. Hunting and the use of game are forbidden "while ye are *hurumun," i.e.,* while ye are fl) in the Sacred Precincts, or (2) in the special pilgrim garb (ihram), as to which see n. 212, 2:196. In most cases the two amount to the same thing. The Sacred Precincts are sanctuary both for man and beast.

685 Allah's commands are not arbitrary. His Will is the perfect Archetype or Plan of the world. Everything He wills has regard to His Plan, in which are reflected His perfect wisdom and goodness

2. O ye who believe! Violate not the sanctity of the symbols of Allah,(686) nor of the Sacred Month,(687) nor of the animals brought for sacrifice, nor the garlands that mark out such animals, nor the people resorting to the Sacred House,(688) seeking of the bounty and good pleasure of their Lord. But when ye are clear of the Sacred Precincts(689) and of pilgrim garb, ye may hunt and let not the hatred of some people in (once) shutting you out of the Sacred Mosque lead you to transgression (and hostility on your part).(690) Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour: fear Allah. for Allah is strict in punishment.

686 *Cf.* 2:158, where Safa and Marwa are called "Symbols *(sha'a'ir)* of Allah". Here the Symbols are everything connected with the Pilgrimage, *viz., (1)* the places (like Safa and Marwa, or the Ka'bah or 'Arafat, etc.); (2) the rites and ceremonies prescribed; (3) prohibitions (such as that of hunting, etc.); (4) the times and seasons prescribed. There is spiritual and moral symbolism in all these. See notes on 2:158, 2:194-200.

687 The month of pilgrimage, or else, collectively, the four sacred months (9:36), *viz.,* Rajab (7th), Dhu al Qa'dah (11th), Dhu al Hijjah (12th), the month of Pilgrimage, and Muharram (the first of the year). In all these months War was prohibited. Excepting Rajab the other three months are consecutive.

688 The immunity from attack or interference extended to the animals brought as offerings for sacrifice and the garlands or fillets or distinguishing marks which gave them immunity. They were treated as sacred symbols. And of course every protection or immunity was enjoyed by the Pilgrims.

689 This is the state opposite to that described in n. 684, *i.e.,* when ye have left the Sacred Precincts, and have doffed the special pilgrim garb, showing your return to ordinary life.

690 See n. 205 to 2:191. In the sixth year of the Hijrah the Pagans, by way of hatred and persecution of the Muslims, had prevented them from access to the Sacred Mosque. When the Muslims were re-established in Makkah, some of them wanted to retaliate and exclude the Pagans or in some way to interfere with them in the Pilgrimage. This is condemned. Passing from the immediate event to the general principle, we must not retaliate or return evil for evil. The hatred of the wicked does not justify hostility on our part. We have to help each other in righteousness and piety, not in perpetuating feuds of hatred and enmity. We may have to fight and put down evil, but never in a spirit of malice or hatred, but always in a spirit of justice and righteousness.

3. Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which hath been invoked The name of other than Allah;(691) that which hath been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored to death; that which hath been (partly) eaten by a wild animal; unless ye are able to slaughter it (in due form);(692) that which is sacrificed(693) on stone (altars); (forbidden) also is the division(694) (of meat) by raffling with arrows: that is impiety. This day have those who reject faith given up all hope of your religion:(695) yet fear them not but fear Me. This day have I perfected your religion(696) for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. But if any is forced by hunger, with no inclination to transgression, Allah is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

691 *Cf.* 2:173 and n. 173 and 174. The prohibition of dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which other names than that of Allah have been invoked, has been there explained.

692 If an animal dies by strangling, or by a violent blow, or a headlong fall, or by being gored to death, or by being attacked by a wild animal, the presumption is that it becomes carrion, as the life-blood is congealed before being taken out of the body. But the presumption can be rebutted. If the life-blood still flows and the solemn mode of slaughter *(dhabh)* in the name of Allah as a sacrifice is carried out, it becomes lawful as food.

693 This was also an idolatrous rite, different from that in which a sacrifice was devoted to a particular idol or a false god.

694 Gambling of all kinds is forbidden: 2:219. A sort of lottery or raffle practised by Pagan Arabs has been described in n. 241. Division of meat in this way is here forbidden, as it is a form of gambling.

695 So long as Islam was not organised, with its own community and its own laws, the Unbelievers had hoped to wean the Believers from the new Teaching. (Now that hope was gone, with the complete organisation of Islam).

696 It is considered by many as the last verse revealed chronologically, marking the approaching end of al Mustafa's ministry in his earthly life.

4. They ask thee what is lawful to them (as food).(697) Say: lawful unto you are (all) things good and pure: and what ye have taught your trained hunting animals (to catch) in the manner directed to you by Allah. eat what they catch for you,(698) but pronounce the name of Allah over it: and fear Allah. for Allah is swift in taking account.

697 The previous verse was negative: it denned what was not lawful for food, *viz.,* things gross, or disgusting, or dedicated to superstition. This verse is positive: it defines what lawful, *viz.,* all things are good and pure.

698 In the matter of the killing for meat, the general rule is that the name of Allah, the true God should be pronounced as a rite in order to call our attention to the fact that we do not take life thoughtlessly but solemnly for food, with the permission of Allah, to whom we render the life back. The question of hunting is then raised. How can this solemn rite be performed when we send forth trained hawks, trained hounds, or trained cheetahs or other animals trained for the chase? They must necessarily kill at some distance from their masters. Their game is legalised on these conditions: (1) that they are trained to kill, not merely for their own appetite, or out of mere wantonness, but for their master's food; the training implies that something of the solemnity which Allah has taught us in this matter goes into their action; and (2) we are to pronounce the name of Allah over the quarry; this is interpreted to mean that the *Takbir should* be pronounced when the hawk or dog, etc., is released to the quarry. (R).

5. This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book(699) is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book,(700) revealed before your time,- when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues if any one rejects faith,(701) fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good).

699 The question is for food generally, such as is ordinarily "good and pure": in the matter of meat it should be killed with some sort of solemnity analogous to that of the *Takbir*. The rules of Islam in this respect being analogous to those of the People of the Book, there is no objection to mutual recognition, as opposed to meat killed by Pagans with superstitious rites, *(Cf.* 6:139). In this respect the Christian rule is the same: "That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication." (Acts. 15:29). Notice the bracketing of fornication with things unlawful to eat.

700 Islam is not exclusive. Social intercourse, including inter-marriage, is permitted with the People of the Book. A Muslim man may marry a woman from their ranks on the same terms as he would *marry* a Muslim woman, *i.e.,* he must give her an economic and moral status, and must not be actuated merely by motives of lust or physical desire. A Muslim woman may not marry a non-Muslim man, because her Muslim status would be affected: the wife ordinarily takes the nationality and status given by her husband's law. A non-Muslim woman marrying a Muslim husband would be expected eventually to accept Islam. Any man or woman, of any race or faith, may, on accepting Islam, freely marry any Muslim woman or man, provided it be from motives of purity and chastity and not of lewdness.

701 As always, food, cleanliness, social intercourse, marriage and other interests in life, are linked with our duty to Allah and faith in Him. Duty and faith are for our own benefit, here and in the Hereafter, (*Cf.* 39:65).

6. O ye who believe! when(702) ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; Rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If ye are in a state of ceremonial impurity,(703) bathe your whole body. But if ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth,(704) and rub therewith your faces and hands, Allah doth not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete his favour to you, that ye may be grateful.

702 These are the essentials of Wudu', or ablutions preparatory to prayers, *viz.* (1) to bathe the whole face in water, and (2) both hands and arms to the elbows, with (3) a little rubbing of the head with water (as the head is usually protected and comparatively clean), and (4) the bathing of the feet to the ankles. In addition, following the practice of the Prophet, it is usual first to wash the mouth, the throat, and the nose, before proceeding with the face, etc.

703 *Cf.* 4:43 and n. 563. Ritual impurity arises from sex pollution.

704 This is *Tayammum,* or washing with clean sand or earth where water is not available. I take it that this substitute is permissible both for Wudu' and for a full bath, in the circumstances mentioned.

7. And call in remembrance the favour of Allah unto you, and His Covenant,(705) which He ratified with you, when ye said: "We hear and we obey": And fear Allah, for Allah knoweth well the secrets of your hearts.

705 There is a particular and a general meaning. The particular meaning refers to the solemn Pledge and Covenant taken by two groups of people at 'Aqaba, a valley near Mina, the first about fourteen months before the Hijrah, and the second a little later. These were Pledges of fealty to the Messenger of Allah, comparable to the Covenant under Mount Sinai taken in the time of Moses, (see 2:63 and n. 78). The general meaning has been explained in n. 682 to 5:1: man is under a spiritual obligation under an implied Covenant with Allah; Allah has given man reason, judgment, the higher faculties of the soul, and even the position of Allah's vicegerent on earth (2:30), and man is bound to serve Allah faithfully and obey His will. That obedience begins with cleanliness in bodily functions, food, etc. It goes on to cleanliness of mind and thought, and culminates in purity of motives in the inmost recesses of his heart and soul.

8. O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses(706) to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve(707) to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

706 *Cf.* 2:143, 4:135 and 5:44 .

707 To do justice and act righteously in a favourable or neutral atmosphere is meritorious enough, but the real test comes when you have to do justice to people who hate you or to whom you have an aversion. But no less is required of you by the higher moral law.

9. To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness hath Allah promised forgiveness and a great reward.

10. Those who reject faith and deny our signs will be companions of Hell-fire.

11. O ye who believe! Call in remembrance the favour of Allah unto you when certain men formed the design to stretch out their hands against you, but (Allah) held back their hands from you:(708) so fear Allah. And on Allah let believers put (all) their trust.

708 In the lifetime of the Prophet it happened again and again that the enemies of Islam stretched out their hands against him, his people, and his teaching. The odds were, from a worldly point of view, in their favour, but their hands were rendered inert and powerless because they were fighting against the truth of Allah. So does it happen always, now as it did then. True faith must take heart, and at the same time humbly recognise Allah's favour and mercy, and be grateful.

12. Allah did aforetime take a covenant from the Children of Israel,(709) and we appointed twelve captains among them. And Allah said: "I am with you: if ye (but) establish regular prayers, practise regular charity, believe in my messengers, honour and assist them, and loan to Allah a beautiful loan,(710) verily I will wipe out from you your evils, and admit you to gardens with rivers flowing beneath; but if any of you, after this, resisteth faith, he hath truly wandered from the path or rectitude."(711)

709 *Cf.* 2:63 and 78, "Moses . . . called for the elders of the people... and all the people answered together and said, 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do'." (Exod. 19:7-8.) This was under the towering height of Mount Sinai . The captains or elders or leaders of the people were selected, one from each of the twelve tribes, (see 2:60 and n. 73). For census purposes the names of the elders of the tribes are given in Num. 1:4-16: they are called "every one the head of the house of his fathers". Later, twelve other "heads of the Children of Israel" were selected to spy out of the land of Canaan : their names are mentioned in Num. 13:1-16. See also 5:22 -29 and notes.

710 *Cf.* 2:245, n. 276. The phrase means "spending in the cause of Allah." Allah in His infinite grace looks upon this as a loan, for which He gives a recompense manifold.

711 *The path of rectitude:* or the even way: see 2:108, n. 109.

13. But because of their breach of their covenant, We cursed them,(712) and made their hearts grow hard;

they change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the message that was sent them, nor wilt thou cease to find them- barring a few - ever bent on (new) deceits:(713) but forgive them, and overlook(714) (their misdeeds): for Allah loveth those who are kind.

712 *Cursed them:* that means that because of the breach of their Covenant, Allah withdrew His overflowing Grace from them. The withdrawal of Grace made their hearts grow hard in two ways: (1) they were no longer protected from the assaults of evil, and (2) they became impervious even to the message of forgiveness and mercy which is open to all Allah's creatures.

713 Israel, when it lost Allah's grace as above, began to sin against truth and religion in three ways: (1) they began to misuse Scripture itself, by either taking words out of their right meaning, or applying them to things for which they were never meant, (*Cf.* 5:41); (2) in doing so, they conveniently forgot a part of the Message and purpose of Allah; and (3) they invented new deceits to support the old ones.

714 *Cf.* 2:109 and n. 110, where I have explained the different shades of meaning in the words for "forgiveness."

14. From those, too, who call themselves Christians, We did take a Covenant,(715) but they forgot a good part of the message that was sent them: so we estranged them, with enmity and hatred between the one and the other, to the day of judgment. And soon will Allah(715-A) show them what it is they have done.

715 The Christian Covenant may be taken to be the charge which Jesus gave to his disciples, and which the disciples accepted, to welcome Ahmad (Q. 61:6). Glimpses of this are to be found in the Gospel of St. John even as it exists now (John 15:26 , 16:7). It is those who call themselves "Christians" who reject this. True Christians have accepted it The enmity between those who call themselves Christains and the Jews will continue till the Last Day, *(Cf.* 5:64).

715-A The change from the First Person in the beginning of the verse to the Third Person here illustrates the change from the personal relationship of the Covenant, to the impersonal operation of Justice at Judgement. *Cf.* 35:9.

15. O people of the Book! There hath come to you our Messenger, revealing to you much that ye used to hide in the Book, and passing over much (that is now unnecessary). There hath come to you from Allah a (new) light and a perspicuous Book,-(716)

716 *Mubin:* I wish I could translate by a simpler word than "perspicuous". But "plain" may mean unadorned, the opposite of beautiful, and this Book is among the most beautiful that it is the privilege of mankind to read. "Clear" would be right as far as it means "unambiguous, self-evident, not involved in mysteries of origin, history, or meaning, one which everyone can understand as to the essentials necessary for him, without the intervention of priests or privileged persons". *Mubin* has all these meanings, but it suggests, besides, some quality of a shining light, by which we are able to *make* things clear, to distinguish the true from the false. This I think is suggested better by "perspicuous" than by the word "clear". Besides it is hardly good idiom to speak of "a clear Book", *(Cf.* 7:183 and 12:1).

16. Wherewith Allah guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leadeth them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light,- guideth them to a path that is straight.

17. In blasphemy indeed are those that say that Allah is Christ the son of Mary. Say: "Who then hath the least power against Allah, if His will were to destroy Christ the son of Mary, his mother, and all every - one that is on the earth? For to Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between. He createth(717) what He pleaseth. For Allah hath power over all things."

717 The most honoured of the prophets of Allah are but men. All power belongs to Allah, and not to any man. Allah's creation may take many forms, but because in any particular form it is different from what we see daily around us, it does not cease to be Creation, or to be subject to the power of Allah. No creature can be God.

18. (Both) the Jews and the Christians say: "We are sons of Allah, and his beloved."(718) Say: "Why then doth He punish you for your sins? Nay, ye are but men,- of the men he hath created: He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and He punisheth whom He pleaseth: and to Allah belongeth(719) the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between: and unto Him is the final goal (of all)"

718 *Sons of God: Cf.* Job , 38:7: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." In the 29th Psalm, 1st verse, the authorised Translation "O ye mighty" should apparently be "O ye sons of Elim". El being a name of God. *Cf.* also Genesis, 6:2: "The sons of God saw the daughters of men."

Beloved: Cf. Psalms, 127:2: "He giveth his beloved sleep." If used figuratively, these and like words refer to the love of Allah. Unfortunately, "son" used in a physical sense, or "beloved" in an exclusive sense as if Allah loved only the Jews, make a mockery of religion.

719 This refrain in the last verse negatives the idea of sonship, and in this verse negatives the idea of an exclusive "Beloved". In both cases it means that Allah is independent of physical relationships or exclusive partiality.

19. O People of the Book! Now hath come unto you, making (things) clear unto you, Our Messenger, after the break(720) in (the series of) our messengers, lest ye should say: "There came unto us no bringer of glad tidings and no warner (from evil)": But now hath come unto you a bringer of glad tidings and a warner (from evil). And Allah hath power over all things.

720 The six hundred years (in round figures) between Christ and Muhammad were truly the dark ages of the world. Religion was corrupted; the standard of morals fell low; many false systems and heresies, arose; and there was a break in the succession of prophets until the advent of Muhammad.

20. Remember Moses said to his people: "O my people! Call in remembrance the favour of Allah unto you, when He produced prophets among you,(721) made you kings,(722) and gave you what He had not given to any other among the peoples.(723)

721 There was a long line of patriarchs and prophets before Moses, *e.g.,* Abraham, Isaac, Isma'il, Jacob, etc.

722 From the slavery of Egypt the Children of Israel were made free and independent, and thus each man became as it were a king, if only he had obeyed Allah and followed the lead of Moses.

723 *Cf.* Exod. 19:5: "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." Israel was chosen to be the vehicle of Allah's message, the highest honour which any nation can receive.

21. "O my people! Enter(724) the holy land which Allah hath assigned unto you, and turn not back ignominiously, for then will ye be overthrown, to your own ruin."

724 We now come to the events detailed in the 13th and 14th chapters of the Book of Numbers in the Old Testament. Read these as a Commentary, and examine a good map of the Sinai Peninsula, showing its connections with Egypt on the west, Northwest Arabia on the east, and Palestine on the northeast. We may suppose that Israel crossed from Egypt into the Peninsula somewhere near the northern extremity of the Gulf of Suez . Moses organised and numbered the people, and instituted the Priesthood. They went south about 200 miles to Mount Sinai where the Law was received. Then, perhaps a hundred and fifty miles north, was the desert of Paran , close to the southern borders of Canaan . From the camp there, twelve men were sent to spy out the land, and they penetrated as far as Hebron , say about 150 miles north of their camp, about 20 miles south of the future Jerusalem . They saw a rich country, and brought from it pomegranates and figs and a bunch of grapes so heavy that it had to be carried by two men on a staff. They came back and reported that the land was rich, but the men there were too strong for them. The people of Israel had no courage and no faith, and Moses remonstrated with them.

22. They said: "O Moses! In this land are a people of exceeding strength:(725) Never shall we enter it until

they leave it: if (once) they leave, then shall we enter."

725 The people were not willing to follow the lead of Moses, and were not willing to fight for their "inheritance." In effect they said: "Turn out the enemy first, and then we shall enter into possession." In Allah's Law we must work and strive for what we wish to enjoy.

23. (But) among (their) Allah.fearing men were two on whom Allah had bestowed His grace:(726) They said: "Assault them at the (proper) Gate: when once ye are in, victory will be yours; But on Allah put your trust if ye have faith."

726 Among those who returned after spying out the land were two men who had faith and courage. They were Joshua and Caleb. Joshua afterwards succeeded Moses in the leadership after 40 years. These two men pleaded for an immediate entry through the proper Gate, which I understand to mean, "after taking all due precautions and making all due preparations". *Cf.* 2:189 and n. 203. But of course, they said, they must put their trust in Allah for victory.

24. They said: "O Moses! while they remain there, never shall we be able to enter, to the end of time. Go thou, and thy Lord, and fight ye two, while we sit here (and(727) watch)."

727 The advice of Joshua and Caleb, and the proposals of Moses under divine instructions were unpalatable to the crowd, whose prejudices were further inflamed by the other ten men who had gone with Joshua and Caleb. They made an "evil report," and were frightened by the great stature of the Canaanites. The crowd was in open rebellion, was prepared to stone Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb, and return to Egypt . Their reply to Moses was full of irony, insolence, blasphemy, and cowardice. In effect they said: "You talk of your God and all that: go with your God and fight there if you like: we shall sit here and watch."

25. He said: "O my Lord! I have power only over myself and my brother:(728) so separate us from this rebellious people!"

728 "Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation." (Num. 14:5). According to the words in the Old Testament story, God said: "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them," (Num. 14:12). Moses prayed and interceded. But as we are told here, (a spiritual touch not found in the Jewish story), Moses was careful to separate himself and his brother from the rebellion.

26. Allah said: "Therefore will the land be out of their reach for forty years:(729) In distraction will they wander through the land: But sorrow thou not over these rebellious people.

729 The punishment of the rebellion of these stiff-necked people, rebellion that was repeated "these ten times", (Num. 14:22) and more, was that they were left to wander distractedly hither and thither, through the wilderness for forty years. That generation was not to see the Holy Land . All those that were twenty years old and upwards were to die in the wilderness: "your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness." (Num. 14:29). Only those who were then children would reach the promised land. And so it happened. From the desert of Paran they wandered south, north, and east for forty years. From the head of what is now the Gulf of 'Aqaba, they travelled north, keeping to the east side of the depression of which the Dead Sea and the river Jordan are portions. Forty years afterwards they crossed the Jordan opposite what is now Jericho , but by that time Moses, Aaron, and the whole of the elder generation had died, *(Cf.* 5:68).

27. Recite to them the truth(730) of the story of the two sons(731) of Adam. Behold! they each presented a sacrifice (to Allah.: It was accepted from one, but not from the other. Said the latter: "Be sure I will slay thee." "Surely," said the former, "(Allah) doth accept of the sacrifice of those who are righteous.

730 Literally, "recite to them in truth the story", etc. The point is that the story in Gen. 4:1-15 is a bare narrative, not including the lessons now to be enforced. The Prophet is told now to supply the truth of the matter, the details that will enforce the lessons.

731 The two sons of Adam were Habil (in the English Bible, Abel) and Qabil (in English, Cain). Cain was the elder, and Abel the younger-the righteous and innocent one. Presuming on the right of the elder, Cain was puffed up with arrogance and jealousy, which led him to commit the crime of murder. Among the Christians, Cain was the type of the Jew as against Abel the Christian. The Jew tried to kill Jesus and exterminate the Christian. In the same way, as against Muhammad, the younger brother of the Semitic family, Cain was the type of the Old Testament and New Testament people, who tried to resist and kill Muhammad and put down his people.

28. "If thou dost stretch thy hand against me, to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against thee to slay thee: for I do fear Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds.

29. "For me, I intend to let thee draw on thyself my sin as well as thine,(732) for thou wilt be among the companions of the fire, and that is the reward of those who do wrong."(733)

732 *My sin as well as thine.* There are two possible interpretations: (1) The obvious one is that the unjust murderer not only carried on himself the burden of his own sin, but also the burden of his victim's sins. The victim, in suffering a wrong or injustice, is forgiven his own sins, and the wrongdoer, having been warned, aggravates his own sin. (2) "My sin" has also been interpreted as "the sin against me, in that thou slayest me": in that case "thy sin" may mean either "thy crime in committing a murder," or "thy sin against thyself, for the crime causes real loss to thyself in the Hereafter." See the last clause of the next verse.

733 Abel's speech is full of meaning. He is innocent and God-fearing. To the threat of death held out by the other, he returns a calm reply, aimed at reforming the other. "Surely," he pleads, "if your sacrifice was not accepted, there was something wrong in you, for Allah is just and accepts the sacrifice of the righteous. If this does not deter you, I am not going to retaliate, though there is as much power in me against you as you have against me. I fear my Maker, for I know He cherishes all His Creation. Let me warn you that you are doing wrong. I do not intend even to resist, but do you know what the consequences will be to you? You will be in spiritual torment."

30. The (selfish) soul of the other led him to the murder of his brother: he murdered him, and became (himself) one of the lost ones.(734)

734 The innocent unselfish pleading of the younger brother had no effect, for the soul of the other was full of pride, selfishness and jealousy. He committed the murder, but in doing so, ruined his own self.

31. Then Allah sent a raven, who scratched the ground, to show him how to hide the shame of his brother.(735) "Woe is me!" said he; "Was I not even able to be as this raven, and to hide the shame of my brother?" then he became full of regrets-(736)

735 *Saw 'ah* may mean "corpse", with a suggestion of nakedness and shame in two senses: (1) the sense of being exposed without burial, and (2) the sense of being insulted by being violently deprived by the unwarranted murder, of the soul which inhabited it - the soul, too, of a brother.

736 The thought at last came home to the murderer. It was dreadful indeed to slay anyone-the more so as he was a brother, and an innocent righteous brother! But worse still, the murderer had not even the decency to bury the corpse, and of this simple duty he was reminded by a raven-a blackbird usually held in contempt! His regret was on that account That was no true repentance.

32. On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people:(737) and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. Then although there came to them Our messengers with clear signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land.

737 The story of Cain is referred to in a few graphic details in order to tell the story of Israel . Israel rebelled against Allah, slew and insulted righteous men who did them no harm but on the contrary came in all humility. When Allah withdrew His favour from Israel because of its sins and bestowed it on a brother nation, the jealousy of Israel plunged it deeper into sin. To kill or seek to kill an individual because he represents an ideal is to kill all who uphold the ideal. On the other hand, to save an individual life in the same circumstances is to save a whole community. What could be stronger condemnation of individual assassination and revenge? (*Cf.* 5:45).

33. The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land(738) is: execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides,(739) or exile from the land: that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter;

738 For the double crime of treason against the State, combined with treason against Allah, as shown by overt crimes, four alternative punishments are mentioned, any one of which is to be applied according to circumstances, *viz.,* execution (cutting off of the head), crucifixion, maiming, or exile. These were features of the Criminal Law then and for centuries afterwards, except that tortures such as "hanging, drawing, and quartering" in English Law, and piercing of eyes and leaving the unfortunate victim exposed to a tropical sun, which was practised in Arabia, and all such tortures were abolished. In any case sincere repentance before it was too late was recognised as a round for mercy.

739 Understood to mean the right hand and the left foot.

34. Except for those who repent before they fall into your power: in that case, know that Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

35. O ye who believe! Do your duty to Allah,(740) seek the means of approach unto Him, and strive with might and main in his cause: that ye may prosper.(741)

740 *Taqwa* here too might be translated "fear of Allah", but the very next clause shows that "fear of Allah" does not mean "fear" in the ordinary sense, which would make you avoid the object of fear. On the contrary the "fear of Allah" is the intense desire to avoid everything that is against His Will and Law. It is in fact duty to Allah, for we are told to seek ardently the means by which we may approach Him, and that can only be done by striving with might and main for His cause.

741 "Prosper" in the spiritual sense, for that is all that matters, as the life of this world is brief and fleeting, and of small account as against Eternity.

36. As to those who reject Faith-if they had everything on earth, and twice repeated, to give as ransom for the penalty of the day of judgement, it would never be accepted of them. Theirs would be a grievous penalty.

37. Their wish will be to get out of the Fire, but never will they get out therefrom: their penalty will be one that endures.

38. As to the thief,(742) Male or female, cut off his or her hands: a punishment by way of example, from Allah, for their crime: and Allah is Exalted in power.

742 Here we touch upon jurisprudence. The Canon Law jurists are not unanimous as to the value of the property stolen, which would involve the penalty of the cutting off of the hand. The majority hold that petty thefts are exempt from this punishment. The general opinion is that only one hand should be cut off for the first theft, on the principle that "if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee", (Matt. 18:8). Apparently in the age of Jesus thieves were crucified, (Matt. 27:38).

39. But if the thief repents after his crime, and amends his conduct, Allah turneth to him in forgiveness; for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

40. Knowest thou not(743) that to Allah (alone) belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth? He punisheth whom He pleaseth, and He forgiveth whom He pleaseth: and Allah hath power over all things.

743 Punishment really does not belong to mortals, but to Allah alone. Only, in order to keep civil society together, and protect innocent people from crime, certain principles are laid down on which people can build up their criminal law. But we must always remember that Allah not only punishes but forgives, and forgiveness is the attribute which is more prominently placed before us. It is not our wisdom that can really define the bounds of forgiveness or punishment, but His Will or Plan, which is the true standard of righteousness and justice.

41. O Messenger. let not those grieve thee, who race each other into unbelief:(744) (whether it be) among those who say "We believe" with their lips but whose hearts have no faith; or it be among the Jews,- men who will listen to any lie,- will listen even to others who have never so much as come(745) to thee. They change the words from their (right) times(746) and places: they say, "If ye are given this, take it, but if not, beware!" If any one´s trial is intended by Allah, thou hast no authority in the least for him against Allah. For such - it is not Allah.s will to purify their hearts. For them there is disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter a heavy punishment.

744 Two classes of men are meant, *viz.,* the Hypocrites and the Jews. For both of them Mustafa laboured earnestly and assiduously, and it must have been a cause of great grief and disappointment to him that some among them showed so much insincerity, cunning, and hardness of heart. These are types not yet extinct.

745 There were men among the Jews who were eager to catch up any lie against the Prophet. They had their ears open even to tales from people who had never so much as come near to the Prophet If we understand "for" instead of "to" before "others" (for the Arabic word would bear both meanings), the sense will be: They are keen listeners or spies for any lies they can catch: and they will act as spies for others (their Rabbis, etc.) who are in the background but to whom they carry false tales.

746 *Cf.* 5:13 . The addition of the words *min ba'di* here suggests the change of words from their right *times* as well as places. They did not deal honestly with their Law, and misapplied it, by distorting the meaning. Or it may be that as tale-bearers they distorted the meaning by misrepresenting the context.

42. (They are fond of) listening to falsehood, of devouring(747) anything forbidden. If they do come to thee, either judge between them, or decline to interfere.(748) If thou decline, they cannot hurt thee in the least. If thou judge, judge in equity between them. For Allah loveth those who judge in equity.

747 *Devouring anything forbidden:* both in a literal and in a figurative sense. In the figurative sense, it would be: the taking of usury or bribes, or taking undue advantage of people's weak position or their own fiduciary powers to add to their own wealth.

748 Where it is merely a trick to catch out the unwary, a just man may honourably decline to interfere in a cause submitted to him, as also in a case where the parties are not honesdy desirous of justice, but each hopes that some partiality will be shown to it.

43. But why do they come(749) to thee for decision, when they have (their own) law before them?- Therein is the (plain) command of Allah; yet even after that, they would turn away. For they are not (really) people of Faith.

749 This is a searching question as to the motive of the Jews in bringing their cases for decisions to the Prophet. They came either (1) to ridicule whatever he said, or (2) to deceive him as to facts and snatch a favourable decision which was against equity. If their own Law did not suit their selfish interests, they sometimes twisted it. But Muhammad was always inflexible in his justice.

44. It was We who revealed the law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light(750). By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah.s will, by the rabbis(751) and the doctors of law: for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah.s book, and they were witnesses thereto(752): therefore fear not men, but fear me, and sell not my signs for a miserable price(753). If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers.

750 *Guidance,* with reference to conduct; *light,* with reference to insight into the higher realms of the spirit.

751 *Rabbaniyun* may, I think, be rightly translated by the Jewish title of *Rabbi* for their learned men. Jewish learning is identified with Rabbinical literature. *Ahbar* is the plural of *hibr* or *habr,* by which we may understand Jewish Doctors of Law. Later the term was applied to those of other religions. Query: Is the word connected with the same root as "Hebrew", or "Eber", (Gen. 10:21), the ancestor of the Hebrew race? This seems negatived by the fact that the Arabic root connected with the word "Hebrew" is *'Abar,* not *Habar.*

752 They were living witnesses to the truth of Scripture, and could testify that they had made it known to the people; *(Cf.* 2:143, 4:135, and 5:8).

753 Two charges are made, against the Jews: (1) that even the books which they had, they twisted in meaning, to suit their own purposes, because they feared men rather than Allah: (2) that what they had was but fragments of the original Law given to Moses, mixed up with a lot of semi-historical and legendary matter, and some fine poetry. The *Tawrah* mentioned in the Qur'an is not the Old Testament as we have it: nor is it even the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament, containing the Law embedded in a great deal of semi-historical and legendary narrative). See Appendix II, on the *Tawrah* (printed at the end of this Surah).

45. We ordained therein for them(754): "Life for life, eye for eye, nose or nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds equal for equal." But if any one remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for himself.(755) And if any fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (No better than) wrongdoers(756).

754 The retaliation is prescribed in three places in the Pentateuch, *viz.,* Exod. 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:18-21, and Deut. 19:21. The wording in the three quotations is different, but in none of them is found the additional rider for mercy, as here. Note that in Matt. 5:38, Jesus quotes the Old Law "eye for eye." etc., and modifies it in the direction of forgiveness, but the Qur'anic injunction is more practical. This appeal for mercy is as between man and man in the spiritual world. Even where the injured one forgives, the State or Ruler is competent to take such action as is necessary for the preservation of law and order in Society. For crime has a bearing that goes beyond the interests of the person injured: the Community is affected: see 5:32 .

755 This is not part of the Mosaic Law, but the teaching of Jesus and of Muhammad. Notice how the teaching of Jesus is gradually introduced as leading up to the Qur'an

756 The seeming repetitions at the end of verses 44, 45 and 47 are not real repetitions. The significant words in the three cases are: Unbelievers, wrongdoers, and rebellious: and each fits the context. If the Jews tamper with their books they are Unbelievers; if they give false judgements, they are wrongdoers. If the Christians follow not their light, they are rebellious.

46. And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light,(757) and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah.

757 *Guidance and light:* see n. 750 above. For the meaning of the Gospel (Injil), see Appendix III, "On the *Injil ,* (printed at the end of this Surah).

47. Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) those who rebel.(758)

758 See n. 756 above.

48. To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it(759) in safety: so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee. To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way.(760) If Allah had so willed, He would have made you(761) a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah. it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute;(762)

759 After the corruption of the older revelations, the Qur'an comes with a twofold purpose: (1) to confirm the true and original Message, and (2) to guard it, or act as a check to its interpretation. The Arabic word *Mukaymin* is very comprehensive in meaning. It means one who safeguards, watches over, stands witness, preserves, and upholds. The Qur'an safeguards "the Book", for it has preserved within it the teachings of all the former Books. It watches over these Books in the sense that it will not let their true teachings to be lost. It supports and upholds these Books in the sense that it corroborates the Word of Allah which has remained intact in them. It stands as a witness because it bears testimony to the Word of Allah contained in these Books and helps to sort it out from the interpretations and commentaries of the people which were mixed with it; what is confirmed by the Qur'an is the Word of Allah and what is against it is that of the people, *(Cf.* 59:23). (R).

760 Law; *shir'ah*= rules of practical conduct. *Open Way: Minhaj*= the finer things which are above the law, but which are yet available to everyone, like a sort of open highway. The *light* in verses 44 and 46 above, I understand to be something in the still higher regions of the spirit, which is common to mankind, though laws and rules may take different forms among different Peoples.

761 By origin mankind were a single people or nation: 4:1, and 2:213. That being so, Allah could have kept us all alike, with one language, one kind of disposition, and one set of physical conditions (including climate) to live in. But in His wisdom, He gives us diversity in these things, not only at any given time, but in different periods and ages. This tests our capacity for Unity *(Wahdaniyah)* still more, and accentuates the need of Unity and Islam.

762 Men are wont to make conflicting claims regarding Allah, the ultimate destiny of man, and other questions of vital importance. No matter how vehement and eloquent the proponents of false doctrines might be, their efforts will prove fruitless and it will be indisputably clear on the Day of Judgement as to who entertained false notions and who cherished the truth. (Eds.).

49. And this (He commands): Judge thou between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, but beware of them lest they beguile thee from any of that (teaching) which Allah hath sent down to thee. And if they turn away, be assured that for some of their crime it is Allah.s purpose to punish them. And truly most men are rebellious.

50. Do they then seek after a judgment of (the days(763) of) ignorance? But who, for a people whose faith is assured, can give better judgment than Allah.

763 The Days of Ignorance were the days of tribalism, feuds and selfish accentuation of differences in man. Those days are really not yet over. It is the mission of Islam to take us away from that false mental attitude, towards the true attitude of Unity. If our Faith is certain (and not merely a matter of words), Allah will guide us to that Unity.

51. O ye who believe! take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors(764): They are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust.

764 That is, look not to them for help and comfort. They are more likely to combine against you than to help you. And this happened more than once in the lifetime of the Prophet, and in after-ages again and again. He who associates with them and shares their counsels must be counted as of them. (R).

52. Those in whose hearts(765) is a disease - thou seest how eagerly they run about amongst them, saying: "We do fear lest a change of fortune bring us disaster." Ah! perhaps Allah will give (thee) victory, or a decision according to His will. Then will they repent of the thoughts which they secretly harboured in their hearts.

765 *Cf.* 2:10 .

53. And those who believe will say: "Are these the men who swore their strongest oaths by Allah, that they were with you?(766)" All that they do will be in vain, and they will fall into (nothing but) ruin.

766 The Hypocrites, while matters were doubtful, pretended to be with Muslims, but were in league with their enemies. When matters came to a decision and Allah granted victory to Islam, their position was awkward. They were not only disowned by the Muslims, but the Muslims could well say in reproach to their enemies: "Are these the men who swore friendship for you? What was their friendship worth to you? Where are they now?"

54. O ye who believe! if any from among you turn back from his Faith, soon will Allah produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him,- lowly with the believers, mighty against the rejecters, fighting in the way of Allah, and never afraid of the reproaches of such as find fault.(767) That is the grace of Allah, which He will bestow on whom He pleaseth. And Allah encompasseth all, and He knoweth all things.

767 As "most men are rebellious" (5:49), it is inevitable that there should be apostates even from such a religion of reason and common-sense as Islam. But here is a warning to the Muslim body that they should not repeat the history of the Jews, and become so self-satisfied or arrogant as to depart from the spirit of Allah's teaching. If they do, the loss will be their own. Allah's bounty is not confined to one group or section of humanity. He can always raise up people who will follow the true spirit of Islam. That spirit is defined in two ways: first in general terms; they will love Allah and Allah will love them; and secondly, by specific signs; amongst the Brethren, their attitude will be that of humility, but to wrongdoers they will offer no mealy-mouthed compromises; they will always strive and fight for truth and right: they will know no fear, either physical, or that more insidious form, which says: "What will people say if we act thus?" They are too great in mind to be haunted by any such thought. For, as the next verse says, their friends are Allah, His Prophet, and His people, the people who judge rightly, without fear or favour.

55. Your (real) friends are (no less than) Allah, His Messenger, and the (fellowship of) believers,- those who establish regular prayers and regular charity, and they bow down humbly (in worship).

56. As to those who turn (for friendship) to Allah, His Messenger, and the (fellowship of) believers,- it is the fellowship of Allah that must certainly triumph.

57. O ye who believe! take not for friends and protectors those who take your religion for a mockery or sport-(768) whether among those who received the Scripture before you, or among those who reject Faith; but fear ye Allah, if ye have faith (indeed).

768 It is not right that we should be in intimate association with those to whom religion is either a subject of mockery or at best is nothing but a plaything. They may be amused, or they may have other motives for encouraging you. But your association with them will sap the earnestness of your faith, and make you cynical and insincere.

58. When ye proclaim your call to prayer they take it (but) as mockery and sport; that is because they are a people without understanding.

59. Say: "O people of the Book! Do ye disapprove of us for no other reason than that we believe in Allah, and the revelation that hath come to us and that which came before (us), and (perhaps) that most of you are rebellious and disobedient?(769)"

769 There is the most biting irony in this and the next verse. You People of the Book! Do you hate us because we believe in Allah and not only our scripture, but yours also? Perhaps you hate us because we obey and you are in rebellion against Allah! Why hate us? There are worse things than our obedience and our faith. Shall 1 tell you some of them? Our test will be: what treatment Allah meted out to the things 1 mention. Who were the people who incurred the curse of Allah? (See Deut. 11:28 , and 28:15-68; and numerous passages like Hosea 8:14, and 9:1.). Who provoked Allah's wrath? (See numerous passages like Deut. 1:34; Matt. 3:7.) Who forsook Allah, and worshipped evil? (See Jeremiah, 16:11-13). That is your record. Is that why you hate us?'

60. Say: "Shall I point out to you something much worse than this, (as judged) by the treatment it received from Allah. those who incurred the curse of Allah and His wrath, those of whom some He transformed into apes and swine,(770) those who worshipped evil;- these are (many times) worse in rank, and far more astray from the even path!"

770 For apes see 2:65. For men possessed by devils, and the devils being sent into swine, see Matt. 8:28-32. Or perhaps both apes and swine are allegorical: those who falsified Allah's scriptures became lawless like apes, and those who succumbed to filth, gluttony, or gross living became like swine.

61. When they come to thee, they say: "We believe": but in fact they enter with a mind against Faith, and they go out with the same but Allah knoweth fully all that they hide.

62. Many of them dost thou see, racing each other in sin and rancour, and their eating of things(771) forbidden. Evil indeed are the things that they do.

771 *Eating of things forbidden:* maybe construed in a literal or a figurative sense. From its juxtaposition with sin and hatred, it is better to construe it in a figurative sense, as referring to their fraudulent misappropriations of other people's property or trust property. "Eating" is used in 5:66 below in the general sense of enjoyment and happiness.

63. Why do not the rabbis and the doctors of Law forbid them from their (habit of) uttering sinful words and eating things forbidden? Evil indeed are their works.

64. The Jews say: "(Allah)´s hand(772) is tied up." Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for the (blasphemy) they utter. Nay, both His hands are widely outstretched: He giveth and spendeth (of His bounty) as He pleaseth. But the revelation that cometh to thee from Allah increaseth in most of them their obstinate rebellion(773) and blasphemy. Amongst them we have placed enmity(774) and hatred till the Day of Judgment. Every time they kindle the fire of war, Allah doth extinguish it; but they (ever) strive to do mischief(775) on earth. And Allah loveth not those who do mischief.

772 *Cf.* 5:12 and 2:245, for a "beautiful loan to Allah", and 3:81, for the blasphemous taunt, "Then Allah is poor!" It is another form of the taunt to say, "Then Allah's hands are tied up. He is close-fisted. He does not give!" This blasphemy is repudiated. On the contrary, boundless is Allah's bounty, and He gives, as it were, with both hands outstretched- a figure of speech for unbounded liberality.

773 Their jealousy-because al Mustafa is chosen for Allah's Message-is so great that it only confirms and strengthens their rebellion and blasphemy.

774 *Cf.* 5:14 , where the eternal warring of the Christian sects, among themselves and against the Jews, is referred to. The reference is to the whole of the People of the Book, Jews and Christians- their internal squabbles and their external disputes, quarrels, and wars.

775 The argument of the whole verse may be thus stated. The Jews blaspheme and mock, and because of their jealousy, the more they are taught, the more obstinate they become in their rebellion. But what good will it do to them? Their selfishness and spite sow quarrels among themselves, which will not be healed till the Day of Judgement. When they stir up wars, especially against the innocent, Allah's Mercy is poured down like a flood of water to extinguish them. But their wickedness continues to devise ever new mischief. And Allah loves not mischief or those who do mischief.

65. If only the People of the Book had believed and been righteous, We should indeed have blotted out their iniquities and admitted them to gardens of bliss.

66. If only they had stood fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that was sent to them from their Lord, they would have enjoyed happiness from every side.(776) There is from among them a party on the

right course: but many of them follow a course that is evil.

776 The literal translation of the two lines would be: "They would have eaten from above them and from below their feet." To eat *(akala)* is a very comprehensive word, and denotes enjoyment generally, physical, social, mental and moral, and spiritual. "To eat what is forbidden" in verses 65 and 66 referred to taking unlawful profit, from usury or trust funds or in other ways. Here "eating" would seem to mean receiving satisfaction or happiness in this life as well as in the life to come. "From above them" may refer to heavenly or spiritual satisfaction, and "from below their feet" to earthly satisfaction. But it is better to take the words as a general idiom, and understand "satisfaction or happiness from every side", *(Cf.* 6:14 and 7:19). (R).

67. O Messenger. proclaim the (message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord.(777) If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission. And Allah will defend thee from men (who mean mischief). For Allah guideth not those who reject Faith.

777 Muhammad had many difficulties to contend with, many enemies and dangers to avoid. This is to assure him that his Message was true and from Allah. His mission must be fulfilled. And he must-as he did-go forward and proclaim that Message and fulfil his mission, trusting Allah for protection, and unconcerned if people who had lost all sense of right rejected it or threatened him.

68. Say: "O People of the Book! ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord." It is the revelation that cometh to thee from thy Lord, that increaseth in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy. But sorrow thou not over (these) people without Faith.(778)

778 In 5:26 Moses was told not to sorrow over a rebellious people. Here Muhammad is told not to sorrow over people without faith. The second situation is even more trying than the first. Rebellion may be a passing phase. Want of faith is an attitude of mind that is well-nigh hopeless. Yet the Prophet patiently reasoned with them and bore their taunts and insults. If, the argument runs, you do not believe in anything, even in the things that you may be expected to believe in, how can you receive, in faith, Allah's Message that has come in another form? In fact your jealousy adds to your obstinacy and unbelief.

69. Those who believe (in the Qur´an), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabians and the Christians,- any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness-(779) on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

779 Here, as in Surat *al Baqarah* (2:62), the Qur'an underscores the importance of true and genuine faith, which is to be judged by a sincere belief in Allah and man's accountability to Him backed by righteous conduct rather than by mere forms or labels. In both places it repudiates the false claims of the People of the Book that they had a special relationship with Allah for they were the children of Abraham; that they were a chosen people with special privileges, and no matter what they did, their high status would remain unaffected. Here this false notion is refuted and the People of the Book are being reminded that it is through sincere belief and righteous conduct rather than pretentious claims that man can win his Lord's pleasure and achieve ultimate success. The verse does not purport to lay down an exhaustive list of the articles of faith. Nor does it seek to spell out the essentials of a genuine belief in Allah, which has no meaning unless it is accompanied by belief in His Prophets for it is through their agency alone that we know Allah's Will and can abide by it in our practical lives. This is especially true of His final Prophet, Muhammad (peace be on him) whose message is universal, and not confined to any particular group or section of humanity. Belief in the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be on him) is thus an integral part and a logical corollary of belief in Allah. Moreover, it is also an essential test of genuineness of such belief. This becomes clear when the verse is read in conjunction with other relevant verses of the Qur'an. See, for instance, 4:170, 5:16 , 21, 7:157, 158, 21:107, 25:1, 33:40, 61:6. See also 2:40 , 3:31 -32. 4:150-151. (Eds.).

70. We took the covenant of the Children of Israel and sent them messengers, every time, there came to them a messenger with what they themselves desired not - some (of these) they called impostors, and some they (go so far as to) slay.(780)

780 *Cf.* 2:87, and n. 91.

71. They thought there would be no trial (or punishment); so they became blind and deaf;(781) yet Allah (in mercy) turned to them; yet again many of them became blind and deaf. But Allah sees well all that they do.

781 That is, they turned away their eyes from Allah's Signs and they turned a deaf ear to Allah's Message.

72. They do blaspheme who say: "(Allah) is Christ the son of Mary." But said Christ:(782) "O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." Whoever joins other gods with Allah,- Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help.

782 *Cf.* Matt. 4:10, where Christ rebukes Satan for desiring the worship of other than Allah; John 20:17, where Christ says to Mary Magdalene, "Go unto my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." *Cf.* also Luke 18:19, where Christ rebukes a certain ruler for calling him Good Master: "Why callest thou me good? None is good, save One, that is, God." In Mark 12:29Jesus says: "The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel: the Lord our God is One Lord", *(Cf.* 5:116-117).

73. They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One Allah. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them.

74. Why turn they not to Allah, and seek His forgiveness? For Allah is Oft- forgiving, Most Merciful.

75. Christ the son of Mary was no more than a messenger; many were the messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth.(783) They had both to eat their (daily) food. See how Allah doth make His signs clear to them;(784) yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth!

783 She never claimed that she was a mother of God, or that her son was God. She was a pious and virtuous woman.

784 Note how logically the argument has led up from Jewish backslidings and want of faith, to blasphemies associated with the names of Jesus and Mary, and in the following verses to the worship of senseless sticks and stones. Allah is One; His Message is one; yet how people's perversity transforms truth into falsehood, religion into superstition!

76. Say: "Will ye worship, besides Allah, something which hath no power either to harm or benefit you? But Allah,- He it is that heareth and knoweth all things."

77. Say: "O people of the Book! exceed not in your religion(785) the bounds (of what is proper), trespassing beyond the truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by,- who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the even way.

785 Excess, as opposed to moderation and reason, is the simplest test by which a hypocrite or a selfish man who "trades" on religion, is known from a sincere, pious, and truly religious man. Excess means that truth is sometimes concealed or trampled upon, that the fashions of ancestors or contemporaries are copied or overdone, and Allah's name is dishonoured by blasphemies or the setting up of false gods or fetishes, or that good (or even bad) men are deified and worshipped. The true path is the even path, the path of rectitude, *(Cf.* 2:108, and 5:12).

78. Curses were pronounced on those among the Children of Israel who rejected Faith, by the tongue of

David(786) and of Jesus the son of Mary(787): because they disobeyed and persisted in excesses.

786 The Psalms of David have several passages of imprecations against the wicked. *Cf.* Psalms 109:17-18; 78.21-22 ("Therefore the Lord heard this and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel ; because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation"); Psalms 69:22-28, and Psalms 5:10.

787 *Cf.* Matt. 23:33 ('Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Hell?); also Matt. 12:34 .

79. Nor did they (usually) forbid one another(788) the iniquities which they committed: evil indeed were the deeds which they did.

788 There are men in every community, but if leaders connive at the misdeeds of the commonalty -and even worse, if leaders themselves share in the misdeeds, as happened with the Pharisees and Scribes against whom Jesus spoke out, then that community is doomed.

80. Thou seest many of them turning in friendship to the Unbelievers. Evil indeed are (the works) which their souls have sent forward before them (with the result), that Allah.s wrath is on them, and in torment will they abide.

81. If only they had believed in Allah, in the Messenger, and in what hath been revealed to him, never would they have taken them for friends and protectors, but most of them are rebellious wrong-doers.

82. Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say,(789) "We are Christians": because amongst these are men devoted to learning(790) and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant.

789 The meaning is not that they merely call themselves Christians, but that they are such sincere Christians that they appreciate Muslim virtues, as did the Abyssinians to whom Muslim refugees went during the persecution in Makkah. (R).

790 *Qissis:* I have translated as "devoted to learning," following the Commentators. It seems to be a foreign word, possibly Abyssinian rather than Syriac, as the reference seems to be to the Abyssinian Christians. Their real devotion to learning and the renunciation of the world by the Monastic Orders are contrasted with the hypocrisy and arrogance of the Pharisees and Scribes.

83. And when they listen to the revelation received by the Messenger, thou wilt see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognise the truth: they pray: "Our Lord! we believe; write us down among the witnesses.

84. "What cause can we have not to believe in Allah and the truth which has come to us, seeing that we long for our Lord to admit us to the company of the righteous?"

85. And for this their prayer hath Allah rewarded them with gardens, with rivers flowing underneath,- their eternal home. Such is the recompense of those who do good.

86. But those who reject Faith and belie our Signs,- they shall be companions of Hell-fire.

87. O ye who believe! make not unlawful the good things which Allah hath made lawful for you, but commit no excess:(791) for Allah loveth not those given to excess.

791 In pleasures that are good and lawful the crime is excess. There is no merit merely in abstention or asceticism, though the humility or unselfishness that may go with asceticism may have its value. In 5:82 Christian monks are praised for particular virtues, though here and elsewhere monasticism is disapproved of. Use Allah's gifts of all kinds with gratitude, but excess is not approved of by Allah.

88. Eat of the things which Allah hath provided for you, lawful and good; but fear Allah, in Whom ye believe.

89. Allah will not call you to account for what is futile in your oaths,(792) but He will call you to account for your deliberate oaths: for expiation, feed ten indigent persons, on a scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom. If that is beyond your means, fast for three days. That is the expiation for the oaths ye have sworn. But keep to your oaths. Thus doth Allah make clear to you His signs, that ye may be grateful.

792 Vows of penance or abstention may sometimes be futile, or even stand in the way of really good or virtuous act. See 2:224-226, and notes. The general principles established are: (1) take no futile oaths; (2) use not Allah's name, literally or in intention, to fetter yourself against doing a lawful or good act; (3) keep to your solemn oaths to the utmost of your ability; (4) where you are unable to do so, expiate your failure by feeding or clothing the poor, or obtaining some one's freedom, or if you have not the means, by fasting. This is from a spiritual aspect. If any party suffers damage from your failure, compensation will be due, but that would be a question of law or equity.

90. O ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling,(793) (dedication of) stones,(794) and (divination by) arrows,(795) are an abomination,- of Satan´s handwork: eschew such (abomination), that ye may prosper.

793 *Cf.* 2:219, and notes 240 and 241.

794 *Cf.* 5:3. The stones there referred to were stone altars or stone columns on which oil was poured for consecration, or slabs on which meat was sacrificed to idols. Any idolatrous or superstitious practices are here condemned. The *ansab were* objects of worship, and were common in Arabia before Islam. See Renan, "History of Israel", Chapter 4 and *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum,* Part I. p. 154: Illustrations Nos. 123 and 123 *bis* are Phoenician columns of that kind, found in Malta .

795 *Cf.* 5:3. The arrows there referred to were used for the division of meat by sort of lottery or raffle. But arrows were also used for divination, *i.e.,* for ascertaining lucky or unlucky moments, or learning the wishes of the heathen gods, as to whether men should undertake certain actions or not. All superstitions are condemned.

91. Satan´s plan is (but) to excite enmity and hatred between you, with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, and from prayer: will ye not then abstain?

92. Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger,(796) and beware (of evil): if ye do turn back, know ye that it is Our Messenger.s duty to proclaim (the message)(797) in the clearest manner.

796 We are asked to obey the commands of Allah (which are always reasonable), instead of following superstitions (which are irrational), or seeking undue stimulation in intoxicants or undue advantage in gambling. To some there may be temporary excitement or pleasure in these, but that is not the way either of prosperity or piety, *(Cf.* 64:12).

797 *Cf.* 5:67. Both the worldly and the spiritual aspects of loss are pointed out. Can Allah's Messenger do more?

93. On those who believe and do deeds of righteousness there is no blame for what they ate (in the past), when they guard themselves from evil, and believe, and do deeds of righteousness,- (or) again, guard themselves from evil and believe,- (or) again, guard themselves from evil and do good. For Allah loveth those who do good.(798)

798 There is a subtle symphony in what appears at first sight to be a triple repetition. The relation of such simple regulations as those of food, or game, or the reverence due to a sacred place or sacred institution, has to be explained *vis-a-vis* man's higher duties. Baidawi is right in classifying such duties under three heads: those due to Allah, those due from a man to himself (his self-respect), and those due to other creatures of Allah. Or perhaps all duties have this threefold aspect. The first may be called *believing or faith;* the second, *guarding* ourselves from evil, or *conscience,* and the third, doing good or *righteousness.* But the simplest physical rules, *e.g.,* those about eating, cleanliness, etc., if they are good, refer also to the higher aspects. If we eat bad food, we hurt ourselves, we cause offence to our neighbours, and we disobey Allah. If we have faith and righteousness, are we likely to be wanting in conscience? If we have conscience and faith, are we likely to fail in righteousness? If we have conscience and righteousness, what can be their foundation but faith? All three manifest themselves in a willing obedience to Allah, and love for Him. We realise His love in loving and doing good to His creatures, and our love to Him is meaningless without such good.

94. O ye who believe! Allah doth but make a trial of you in a little matter of game well within reach of your hands and your lances, that He may test(799) who feareth him unseen: any who transgress thereafter, will have a grievous penalty.

799 Literally, "know", *Cf.* 3:166 and 3:154, n. 467. Game is forbidden in the Sacred Precincts. If we deliberately break that injunction, we have no faith and reverence.

95. O ye who believe! Kill not game while in the sacred precincts or in pilgrim garb.(800) If any of you doth so intentionally, the compensation is an offering, brought to the Ka´ba, of a domestic animal equivalent to the one he killed,(801) as adjudged by two just men among you; or by way of atonement, the feeding of the indigent; or its equivalent in fasts: that he may taste of the penalty of his deed. Allah forgives what is past: for repetition Allah will exact from him the penalty. For Allah is Exalted, and Lord of Retribution.

800 See 2:1 and n. 684. The pilgrim garb, *Ihram,* has been explained in n. 212, 2:196.

801 For an inadvertent breach of the game rule there is apparently no penalty. Intentional breach will be prevented, if possible, by previous action. If in some case the preventive action is not effective, the penalty is prescribed. The penalty is in three alternatives: an equivalent animal should be brought to the Ka'ba for sacrifice; If so, the meat would be distributed to the poor; *or* the poor must be fed, with grain or money, according to the value of the animal if one had been sacrificed: or the offender must fast as many days as the number of the poor who would have been fed under the second alternative. Probably the last alternative would only be open if the offender is too poor to afford the first or second, but on this point Commentators are not agreed. The "equivalent animal" in the first alternative would be a domestic animal of similar value or weight in meat or of similar shape *(e.g.,* goat to antelope), as adjudged by two just men on the spot.

The alternatives about the penalty and its remission ("Allah forgives what is past") or exaction explain the last two lines of the verse: being "Exalted and Lord of Retribution", Allah can remit or regulate according to His just laws.

96. Lawful to you is the pursuit(802) of water-game and its use for food,- for the benefit of yourselves and those who travel; but forbidden is the pursuit of land-game;- as long as ye are in the sacred precincts or in pilgrim garb. And fear Allah, to Whom ye shall be gathered back.

802 *Water game: i.e.,* game found in water, *e.g.,* water fowl, fish, etc. "Water" includes sea, river, lake, pond, etc.

97. Allah made the Ka´ba, the Sacred House, an asylum of security for men, as also the Sacred Months,(803) the animals for offerings, and the garlands that mark them:(804) That ye may know that Allah hath knowledge of what is in the heavens and on earth and that Allah is well acquainted with all things.(805)

803 The Sacred or Prohibited Months are explained in n. 209, 2:194, and n. 687, 5:2.

804 See 5:2 and n. 688.

805 All sorts of people from all parts of the earth gather during the Pilgrimage. They must not think that they are strangers, that nobody knows them, and that they may behave as they like. It is the House of Allah, and He has supreme knowledge of all things, of all thoughts, and all motives. As the next verse says, while He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, He is also strict in enforcing respect for His ordinances.

98. Know ye that Allah is strict in punishment and that Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

99. The Messenger.s duty is but to proclaim (the message). But Allah knoweth all that ye reveal and ye conceal.

100. Say: "Not equal are things that are bad and things that are good, even though the abundance of the bad may dazzle thee;(806) so fear Allah, O ye that understand; that (so) ye may prosper."

806 *Cf.* 2:204. People often judge by quantity rather than quality. They are dazzled by numbers: their hearts are captured by what they see everywhere around them. But the man of understanding and discrimination judges by a different standard. He knows that good and bad things are not to be lumped together, and carefully chooses the best, which may be the scarcest, and avoids the bad, though evil may meet him at every step.

101. O ye who believe! Ask not questions about things which, if made plain to you,(807) may cause you trouble. But if ye ask about things when the Qur´an is being revealed, they will be made plain to you, Allah will forgive those: for Allah is Oft- forgiving, Most Forbearing.

807 Many secrets are wisely hidden from us. If the future were known to us, we need not necessarily be happy. In many cases we should be miserable. If the inner meaning of some of the things we see before our eyes were disclosed to us, it might cause a lot of mischief. Allah's Message, insofar as it is necessary for shaping our conduct, is plain and open to us. But there are many things too deep for us to understand, either individually or collectively. It would be foolish to pry into them, as some people tried to do in the time of the Prophet. Where a matter is mentioned in the Qur'an, we can reverently ask for its meaning. That is not forbidden. But we should never pass the bounds of (1) our own capacity to understand, (2) the time and occasion when we ask questions, and (3) the part of the Universal Plan which it is Allah's purpose to reveal to us.

102. Some people before you did ask such questions,(808) and on that account lost their faith.

808 For example, the merely fractious questions asked of Moses by the Jews; 2:68-71. They showed that they had no faith. When foolish questions are asked, and there is no answer, it also shakes the faith of the foolish ones.

103. It was not Allah who instituted (superstitions(809) like those of) a slit-ear she- camel, or a she-camel let loose for free pasture, or idol sacrifices for twin-births in animals, or stallion-camels freed from work: It is blasphemers who invent a lie against Allah. but most of them lack wisdom.

809 A number of Arab Pagan superstitions are referred to. The Pagan mind, not understanding the hidden secrets of nature, attributed certain phenomena to divine anger and were assailed by superstitious fears which haunted their lives. If a she-camel or other female domestic animal had a large number of young, she (or one of her offspring) had her ear slit and she was dedicated to a god; such an animal was a *bahirah.* On return in safety from a journey, or on recovery from an illness a she-camel was similarly dedicated and let loose for free pasture; she was called a *saibah.* Where an animal bore twins, certain sacrifices or dedications were made to idols; an animal so dedicated was a *wasilah.* A stallion-camel dedicated to the gods by certain rites was a *ham.* The particular examples lead to the general truth; that superstition is due to ignorance, and is degrading to men and dishonouring to Allah, *(Cf.* 6:139).

104. When it is said to them: "Come to what Allah hath revealed; come to the Messenger.: They say: "Enough for us(810) are the ways we found our fathers

following." what! even though their fathers were void of knowledge and guidance?

810 *Cf.* 2:170. Where a Messenger of Truth comes to teach us the better way, it is foolish to say: "What our ancestors did is good enough for us."

105. **O ye who believe! Guard your own souls: If ye follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray. the goal of you all is to Allah. it is He that will show you the truth of all that ye do.(811)**

811 *Cf.* 5:48 . There the unity of Allah will reconcile different views. The unity of the one Judge will do perfect justice to each one's conduct, however different in form it may have appeared in this world.

106. **O ye who believe! When death approaches any of you, (take) witnesses among yourselves when making bequests,- two just men of your own (brotherhood) or others from outside if ye are journeying through the earth, and the chance of death befalls you (thus). If ye doubt (their truth), detain them both after prayer, and let them both swear by Allah. "We wish not in this for any worldly gain, even though the (beneficiary) be our near relation: we shall hide not the evidence before Allah. if we do, then behold! the sin be upon us!(812)"**

812 Ordinarily this oath should be decisive, and the matter must rest here. But if it gets known that the oath was false, other evidence may be taken as in the next verse.

107. **But if it gets known that these two were guilty of the sin (of perjury), let two others stand forth in their places,- nearest in kin from among those who claim a lawful right:(813) let them swear by Allah. "We affirm that our witness is truer than that of those two, and that we have not trespassed (beyond the truth): if we did, behold! the wrong be upon us!"**

813 *Istahaqqa* = Deserved having something (good or evil) attributed to one; hence the alternative meanings: (1) committed or was guilty (of a sin); (2) had or claimed a lawful right (to property). The procedure was followed in an actual case in the Prophet's lifetime. A man from Madinah died abroad, having made over his goods, to two friends, to be delivered to his designated heirs in Madihah. They however, kept back a valuable silver cup. When this was found out, oaths were taken from those who knew, justice was done.

108. **That is most suitable: that they may give the evidence in its true nature and shape, or else they would fear that other oaths would be taken after their oaths. But fear Allah, and listen (to His counsel): for Allah guideth not a rebellious people:**

109. **One day will Allah gather the messengers together, and ask: "What was the response ye received (from men to your teaching)?" They will say: "We have no knowledge: it is Thou Who knowest in full all that is hidden.(814)"**

814 A scene of the Day of Reckoning is put before us in graphic words, showing the responsibility and the limitations of the Prophets of Allah, sent to preach His Message to men, with special reference to the Message of Jesus. The Messengers are sent to preach the Truth. What fantastic forms the Message takes in men's reactions to it was beyond their knowledge at the time, and beyond their responsibility. (R).

110. **Then will Allah say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favour(815) to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee(816) with the holy spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity.(817) Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom,(818) the Law and the Gospel and behold! thou didst make(819) out of clay, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and thou didst breathe into it and it becometh a bird by My leave, and thou didst heal those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold! thou didst bring forth the dead by My leave.(820) And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee(821) when thou didst show them the clear Signs, and the unbelievers among them said: ´This is nothing but evident magic.(822)´**

815 In a solemn scene before the Court of Judgement, Jesus is asked to recount all the mercies and favours shown to him, so that his followers should become ashamed of their ingratitude in corrupting that Message, when they could have done so much in profiting by its purity and spiritual truth. This argument continues to the end of the Surah.

816 *Cf.* 2:87 and 3:62, n. 401.

817 *Cf.* 3:46 , and n. 388.

818 *Cf.* 3:48.

819 *Cf.* 3:49 , and n. 390.

820 Note how the words "by My leave" are repeated with each miracle to emphasise the fact that they arose, not out of the power or will of Jesus, but by the leave and will and power of Allah, who is supreme over Jesus as He is over all other mortals.

821 The Jews were seeking to take the life of Jesus long before their final attempt to crucify him; see Luke 4:28-29. Their attempt to crucify him was also foiled, according to the teaching we have received: 4:157.

822 According to Luke (11:15), when Christ performed the miracle of casting out devils, the Jews said he did it through the chief of the devils, *i.e.,* they accused him of black magic. No such miracle of casting out devils is mentioned in the Qur'an. But Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad were all accused of magic and sorcery, by those who could find no other explanation of Allah's power (R).

111. **"And behold! I inspired the disciples to have faith in Me and Mine Messenger. they said, ´We have faith, and do thou(823) bear witness that we bow to Allah as Muslims´".(824)**

823 "Thou" refers to Jesus, who is being addressed by his Disciples. *Cf.* 3:52 .

824 Before or after Muhammad's life on this earth, all who bowed to Allah's Will were Muslims, and their religion is Islam, *Cf.* 3:52 and n. 392.

112. **Behold! the disciples, said: "O Jesus the son of Mary! can thy Lord send down to us a table set (with viands) from heaven?" Said Jesus: "Fear Allah, if ye have faith."(825)**

825 The request of the Disciples savours a little of (1) want of faith, (2) too much attention to physical food, and (3) a childish desire for miracles or Signs. All these three can be proved from the Canonical Gospels, (1) Simon Peter, quite early in the story, asked Jesus to depart from him, as he (Simon) was a sinful man (Luke 5:8). The same Peter afterwards denied his "Master" three times shamelessly when the Master was in the power of his enemies. And one of the Disciples (Judas) actually betrayed Jesus. (2) Even in the Canonical Gospels, so many of the miracles are concerned with food and drink, *e.g.,* the turning of the water into wine (John, 2:1-11); the conversion of five loaves and two small fishes into food for 5,000 men (John 6:5-13), this being the on *ly* miracle recorded in all the four Gospels; the miraculous number of fishes caught for food (Luke 5:4.11); the cursing of the fig tree because it had no fruit (Matt. 21:18-19); the allegory of eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood (John 6:53-57). (3) Because the Samaritans would not receive Jesus into their village, the Disciples James and John wanted a fire to come down from heaven and consume them (Luke 9:54).

113. **They said: "We only wish to eat thereof and satisfy our hearts, and to know that thou hast indeed told us the truth; and that we ourselves may be witnesses to the miracle."**

114. **Said Jesus the son of Mary: "O Allah our Lord! Send us from heaven a table set (with viands),(826) that there may be for us - for the first and the last of us - a solemn festival and a sign from thee; and provide for our sustenance,(827) for thou art the best Sustainer (of our needs)."**

826 The words of the Prayer seem to suggest the Last Supper, *Cf.* also the vision of Peter in "The Acts of the Apostles," 10:9-16.

827 As in Islam, so in Christ's Prayer, sustenance should be taken for both physical and spiritual strength, especially the latter. "Give us this day our daily bread" seems the rendering of a literalist whose attention was fixed too much on bread.

115. Allah said: "I will send it down unto you: But if any of you after that resisteth faith, I will punish him with a penalty such as I have not inflicted on any one among all the peoples."(828)

828 It is a wicked generation that asks for Signs and Miracles. Usually they are not vouchsafed. But where they are, the responsibility of those who ask for them is increased. If, after that, they reject faith, invent lies, and go after false gods or false ideals, their penalty will be worse than that of other people. How this works our practically among those who call themselves Christians is exemplified in such books as the late Mr. W.T. Stead's "If Christ Came to Chicago?" (R).

116. And behold! Allah will say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah.?" He will say: "Glory to Thee! never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, Thou I know not what is in Thine. For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden.(829)

829 Jesus disclaims here any knowledge of the sort of things that are attributed to him by those who take his name. The worship of Mary, though repudiated by the Protestants, was widely spread in the earlier Churches, both in the East and the West.

117. "Never said I to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit, ´worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord´;(830) and I was a witness over them whilst I dwelt amongst them; when Thou didst take me up Thou wast the Watcher over them, and Thou art a witness to all things.(831)

830 *Cf.* 5:72 and n. 782.

831 Jesus here acknowledges that he was mortal, and that his knowledge was limited like that of a mortal.

118. "If Thou dost punish them, they are Thy servant: If Thou dost forgive them, Thou art the Exalted in power, the Wise."(832)

832 The Master can justly punish His servants for disobedience: no one can say to Him nay, for He is high above all. But if He chooses to forgive. He in His wisdom sees things that we mortals cannot see. This is the limit of intercession that men of God can make on behalf of sinners.

119. Allah will say: "This is a day on which the truthful will profit from their truth: theirs are gardens, with rivers flowing beneath,- their eternal Home: Allah well-pleased with them, and they with Allah. That is the great salvation,(833) (the fulfilment of all desires).

833 *Fawz* = Felicity, happiness, achievement, salvation, the attainment or fulfilment of desires. What a beautiful definition of salvation or the end of life!- that we should win Allah's good pleasure and that we should reach the stage at which His goods pleasure is all-in-all to us.

120. To Allah doth belong the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein, and it is He Who hath power over all things.

6. Al An'am (The Cattle)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Praise be Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, and made the darkness and the light. Yet those who reject Faith hold (others) as equal,(834) with their Guardian-Lord.(835)

834 *'Adala* has various meanings: (1) to hold something as equal to something else, as here; to balance nicely; (2) to deal justly, as between one party and another, 42:15; (3) to give compensation or reparation, or something as equivalent to something else, 6:70; (4) to turn the balance the right way, to give a right disposition, to give a just bias or proportion, 82:7; (5) to turn the balance the wrong way, to swerve, to show bias, 4:135.

835 The argument is threefold: (1) Allah created everything you see and know: how can you then set up any of His own creatures as equal to Him? (2) He is your own Guardian-Lord; He cherishes and loves you, how can you be so ungrateful as to run after something else? (3) Darkness and Light are to help you to distinguish between the true from the false: how then can you confound the true God with your false ideas and superstitions? There may also be a repudiation of the Duality of old Persian theology; Light and Darkness are not conflicting Powers; they are both creatures of Allah *(Cf.* 6:150).

2. He it is created(836) you from clay, and then decreed a stated term(837) (for you). And there is in His presence another determined term; yet ye doubt within yourselves!

836 After the general argument, the argument comes to man personally. Can such a miserable creature, created from clay, put himself in opposition to his Creator? And can man forget or doubt that he is here only for a short term of probation? And then, after a period, comes the Day of Account before Allah.

837 This life is a period of probation. The other term leads up to Judgement.

3. And He is Allah in the heavens and on earth. He knoweth what ye hide, and what ye reveal, and He knoweth the (recompense) which ye earn (by your deeds).(838)

838 It is folly to suppose that Allah only reigns in the heavens. He also reigns on earth. He knows all our secret thoughts and motives, and the real worth of all that is behind what we care to show. It is by our deeds that He judges us; for our deeds, whether good or evil, we shall get due recompense in due time.

4. But never did a single one of the signs of their Lord reach them, but they turned away therefrom.

5. And now they reject the truth when it reaches them: but soon shall they learn the reality of what they used to mock at.

6. See they not how many of those before them We did destroy?-(839) generations We had established on the earth, in strength such as We have not given to you - for whom We poured out rain from the skies in abundance, and gave (fertile) streams flowing beneath their (feet): yet for their sins We destroyed them, and raised in their wake fresh generations (to succeed them).

839 Now comes the argument from history, looking backwards and forwards. If we are so short-sighted or arrogant as to suppose that we are firmly established on the earth, secure in our privileges, we are reminded of much greater nations in the past, who failed in their duty and were wiped out. In their fate we must read our own fate, if we fail likewise! But those without faith, instead of facing facts squarely "turn away therefrom."

7. If We had sent unto thee a written (message) on parchment,(839-A) so that they could touch it with their hands, the Unbelievers would have been sure to say: "This is nothing but obvious magic!"(840)

839-A Qirtas **,** in the Prophet's life, could only mean "parchment," which was commonly used as writing material in Western Asia from the 2nd century B.C. The word was derived from the Greek, *Chartas (Cf.* Latin, *"Charta").* Paper, as we know it, made from rags, was first used by the Arabs after the conquest of Smarqand in 751 A.C. The Chinese had used it by the 2nd century **B.C.** The Arabs introduced it into Europe; it was used in Greece in the 11th or 12th century, and in Spain through Sicily in the 12th century. The Papyrus, made from an Egyptian reed, was in Egypt as early as 2500 **B.C.** It gave place to paper in Egypt in the 10th century *(Cf.* 17:93).

840 The materialists want to see actual physical material things before them, but if such a thing came from an unusual source or expressed things they cannot understand, they give it some name like magic, or superstition, or whatever name is in fashion, and they are not helped at all in attaining faith, because their "hearts are diseased" (2:10).

8. They say: "Why is not an angel sent down to him?" If we did send down an angel, the matter would be settled at once, and no respite would be granted them.(841)

841 *Cf.* 2:210. An angel is a heavenly being, a manifestation of Allah's glory, invisible to men who live gross material lives. Such men are given plenty of respite in which to turn in repentance to Allah and make themselves worthy of His light. But if their prayer to see an angel were granted, it would do them no good, for they would be destroyed as darkness is destroyed by light (see also 41:14).

9. If We had made it an angel, We should have sent him as a man, and We should certainly have caused them confusion in a matter which they have already covered with confusion.(842)

842 Supposing an angel should appear to their grosser senses, he could only do it in human form. In that case their present confused notions about spiritual life would be still more confounded. They would say: "We wanted to see an angel, and we have only seen a man!" *(Cf.* 17:93).

10. Mocked were (many) messengers before thee; but their scoffers were hemmed in by the thing that they mocked.(843)

843 *(Cf.* 13:32 and 36:30). "The scoffers were mocked by the thing that they mocked" would express epigrammatic ally part of the sense, but not the whole. "Hemmed in" implies that the logic of events turned the tables, and as a man might be besieged and surrounded by an enemy in war, and would be forced to surrender, so these mockers will find that events would justify Truth, not them. The mockers of Jesus-where were they when Titus destroyed Jerusalem ? The mockers who drove out Muhammad from Makkah-what was their plight when Muhammad came back in triumph and they sued for mercy- *and he gave it to them!* According to the Latin proverb, Great is truth, and must prevail.

11. Say: "Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth."

12. Say: "To whom belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth?" Say: "To Allah. He hath inscribed for Himself (the rule of) Mercy.(844) That He will gather you together for the Day of Judgment, there is no doubt whatever. It is they who have lost their own souls, that will not believe.

844 History, travel, human experience, all prove the Mercy of Allah and the law that without it those who reject Truth tend to lose their own souls and destroy themselves, *(Cf.* 6:54 , 7:19 , and 5:66).

13. To him belongeth all that dwelleth (or lurketh)(845) in the night and the day. For he is the one who heareth and knoweth all things."(846)

845 *Sakana* = (1) to dwell; (2) to rest, to be still, to stop (moving), to lurk; (3) to be quiescent, as a letter which is not moved with a vowel.

If we imagine Night and Day to be places, and each to have (dwelling in them) things that are open and things that are concealed, things that move and things that are still, things that are sounded and things that are quiescent, we get some idea of the imagery implied. The mystery of Time (which seems more abstract than Space) is thus explained and illustrated by the idea of Place or Space, which also is a notion and not a concrete thing. But He Who has control of all these things is the one true Allah.

846 Throughout this section we have a sort of implied dialogue, of which one part is understood from the other part, which is expressed. In verse 11, we might have an imaginary objector saying: "Why go back to the past?" The answer is: "Well travel through the world, and see whether it is not true that virtue and godliness exalt a nation, and the opposite are causes of ruin. Both the past and the present prove this." In verse 12 the objector may say: "But you speak of Allah's power?" The man of God replies: "Yes, but Mercy is Allah's own attribute, and knowledge and wisdom beyond what man can conceive."

14. Say: "Shall I take for my protector any other than Allah, the Maker of the heavens and the earth? And He it is that feedeth but is not fed."(847) Say: "Nay! but I am commanded to be the first of those who bow to Allah (in Islam), and be not thou of the company of those who join gods with Allah."

847 *Feedeth but is not fed:* true both literally and figuratively. To Allah we owe the satisfaction of all needs, but He is independent of all needs, *(Cf.* 7:19 and 5:66 and notes).

15. Say: "I would, if I disobeyed my Lord, indeed have fear of the penalty of a Mighty Day.

16. "On that day, if the penalty is averted from any, it is due to Allah.s mercy; And that would be (Salvation), the obvious fulfilment of all desire.(848)

848 We continue the implied dialogue suggested in n. 846. In verse 14, the objector might say: "But we have other interests in life than religion and Allah." "No," says the man of God. "My Creator is the one and only Power whose protection I seek; and I strive to be first in the race." In verse 15, the objector suggests: "Enjoy the good things of this life; it is short." The answer is: "The Hereafter is more real to me, and promises the true fulfilment of all desire; happiness or affliction comes not from the fleeting pettinesses or illusions of this life, but from the power and wisdom of Allah." In verse 19, the objector makes his final splash: "What evidence is there for all this?" The reply is: "I know it is true for Allah's voice is within me, and my living Teacher awakens that voice; and there is the Book of Inspiration. Allah is one, and there is none other besides."

17. "If Allah touch thee with affliction, none can remove it but He; if He touch thee with happiness, He hath power over all things.(849)

849 The vulgar worship false gods out of fear that they would harm them or hope that they would confer some benefit on them. These false gods can do neither. All power, all goodness is in the hands of Allah. All else is pretence or illusion.

18. "He is the irresistible, (watching) from above over His worshippers; and He is the Wise, acquainted with all things."

19. Say: "What thing is most weighty in evidence?" Say: "(Allah) is witness between me and you; This Qur´an hath been revealed to me by inspiration, that I may warn you and all whom it reaches. Can ye possibly bear witness that besides Allah there is another Allah." Say: "Nay! I cannot bear witness!" Say: "But in truth He is the one Allah, and I truly am innocent of (your blasphemy of) joining others with Him."

20. Those to whom We have given the Book know this as they know(850) their own sons. Those who have lost their own souls refuse therefore to believe.

850 *Cf.* 2:146 and n. 151. In both passages the pronoun translated "this" may mean "him" and refer to Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, as some Commentators think.

21. Who doth more wrong than he who inventeth a lie against Allah or rejecteth His sings? But verily the wrong-doers never shall prosper.

22. One day shall We gather them all together: We shall say to those who ascribed partners (to Us): "Where are the partners whom ye (invented and) talked about?"

23. There will then be (left) no subterfuge for them(851) but to say: "By Allah our Lord, we were not those who joined gods with Allah."

851 *Fitnah* has various meanings, from the root idea of "to try, to test, to tempt;" *e.g.,* (1) a trial or temptation, as in 2:102; (2) trouble, tumult, oppression, persecution, as in 2:191, 193, 217; (3) discord, as in 3:7. (4) subterfuge, an answer that amounts to-a sedition, and excuse founded on a falsehood, as here. Other shades of meaning will be noticed as they occur. Those who blasphemed Allah in imagining false gods will now see the vanity of their imaginations for themselves. What answer can they give now? In their perversity they will deny that they *ever* entertained the notion of false gods.

24. Behold! how they lie against their own souls! But the (lie) which they invented will leave them(852) in the lurch.

852 The lies which they used to tell have now "wandered" from the channels which they used to occupy, and left the liars in the lurch. In denying the indubitable fact that they took false gods, they admit the falsity of their notions and thus are practically convicted out of their own mouths *(Cf.* 28:75).

25. Of them there are some who (pretend to) listen to thee; but We have thrown veils on their hearts, So they understand it not,(852-A) and deafness in their ears; if they saw every one of the signs, not they will believe in them; in so much that when they come to thee, they (but) dispute with thee; the Unbelievers say: "These are nothing but tales of the ancients."

852-A *It* =The Qur'an.

26. Others they keep away from it, and themselves they keep away; but they only destroy their own souls, and they perceive it not.

27. If thou couldst but see when they are confronted with the Fire! They will say: "Would that we were but sent back! Then would we not reject the signs of our Lord, but would be amongst those who believe!"

28. Yea, in their own (eyes) will become manifest what before they concealed. But if they were returned, they would certainly relapse to the things they were forbidden, for they are indeed liars.(853)

853 Their falsity was not due to want of knowledge, but to perversity and selfishness. In their hearts was a disease (2:10): therefore neither their understanding, nor their ears, nor their eyes do their proper work. They twist what they see, hear, or are taught, and go deeper and deeper into the mire. The deceptions which they used to practise on other people will, before the Seat of Judgement, become clear in their own eyes (*Cf.* 26:97 and 35:37)

29. And they (sometimes) say: "There is nothing except our life on this earth, and never shall we be raised up again."

30. If thou couldst but see when they are confronted with their Lord! He will say: "Is not this the truth?" They will say: "Yea, by our Lord!" He will say: "Taste ye then the penalty, because ye rejected Faith."

31. Lost indeed are they who treat it as a falsehood that they must meet Allah,- until on a sudden the hour is on them, and they say: "Ah! woe unto us that we took no thought of it"; for they bear their burdens(854) on their backs, and evil indeed are the burdens that they bear?

854 Grievous is the burden of sins which the wicked will bear on their backs when they become conscious of them. Some commentators personify sins as ugly demons riding on the backs of men, while the men's good deeds become the strong and patient mounts which will carry the men on their backs. If the good deeds are few and the sins many, the man and his good deeds will be crushed under the load of the Evil which they carry *(Cf.* 20:101).

32. What is the life of this world but play and amusement?(855) But best is the home in the hereafter, for those who are righteous. Will ye not then understand?

855 Play and amusement are for preparing our minds for the serious things of life: in themselves they are not serious. So this life is a preparation for the Eternal Home to which we are going, which is far more important than the ephemeral pleasures which may possibly seduce us in this life *(Cf.* 29:64, 47:36, and 57:20).

33. We know indeed the grief which their words do cause thee: It is not thee they reject: it is the signs of Allah, which the wicked contemn.

34. Rejected were the messengers before thee: with patience and constancy they bore their rejection and their wrongs, until Our aid did reach them: there is none that can alter the words (and decrees) of Allah. Already hast thou received some account of those messengers.

35. If their spurning is hard on thy mind, yet if thou wert able to seek a tunnel in the ground or a ladder to the skies and bring them a sign-(856) (what good?). If it were Allah.s will, He could gather them together unto true guidance: so be not thou amongst those who are swayed by ignorance (and impatience)!

856 There were many Signs of a divine mission in the Prophet's life and in the Message which he delivered. If these did not convince the Unbelievers, was it not vain to seek a miraculous Sign from the bowels of the earth or by a visible ascent to the skies? If in the Prophet's eagerness to get all to accept his Message he was hurt at their callousness, active opposition, and persecution of him, he is told that a full knowledge of the working of Allah's Plan would convince him that impatience was misplaced. This was in the days of persecution before the Hijrah. The history in Madinah and after shows how Allah's truth was ultimately and triumphantly vindicated. Who among the sincere devotees of Muhammad can fail to read 6:33 -35 without tears in his eyes?

36. Those who listen (in truth),(857) be sure, will accept: as to the dead, Allah will raise them up; then will they be turned unto Him.

857 There is a double meaning here. (1) If people listen to truth sincerely and earnestly, they must believe; even if the spiritual faculty is dead. Allah will by His grace revive it and they will come to Him, if they really try earnestly to understand. (2) The sincere will believe; but those whose hearts are dead will not listen, yet they cannot escape being brought to the Judgement Seat before Him.

37. They say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "(Allah) hath certainly power to send down a sign: but most of them understand not.(858)

858 Signs are all around them, but they do not understand. If they want a particular Sign to suit their gross ignorance, they will not be humoured, for they can always pick holes in anything that descent to their level.

38. There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you.(859) Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end.

859 "Animals living on the earth" include those living in the water-fishes, reptiles, crustaceans, insects, as well as four-footed beasts. Life on the wing is separately mentioned. "Ta'ir," which is ordinarily translated as "bird," is anything that flies, including mammals like bats. In our pride we may exclude animals from our purview, but they all live a life, social and individual, like ourselves, and all life is subject to the Plan and Will of Allah. In 6:59 we are told that not a leaf falls but by His Will, and things dry and green are recorded in His Book. In other words they all obey His archetypal Plan, the Book which is also mentioned here. They are all answerable in their several degrees to His Plan ("shall be gathered to their Lord in the end"). This is not Pantheism: it is ascribing all life, activity, and existence to the Will and Plan of Allah.

39. Those who reject our sings are deaf and dumb-(860) in the midst of darkness profound: whom Allah willeth, He leaveth to wander: whom He willeth, He placeth on the way that is straight.

860 The limited free will of man makes a little difference. If he sees the Signs but shuts his ears to the true Message, and refuses (like a dumb thing) to speak out the Message which all Nature proclaims, then according to the Plan (of his limited free will) he must suffer and wander, just as, in the opposite case, he will receive race and salvation.

40. Say: "Think ye to yourselves, if there come upon you the wrath of Allah, or the Hour (that ye dread), would ye then call upon other than Allah.- (reply) if ye are truthful!

41. "Nay,- On Him would ye call, and if it be His will, He would remove (the distress) which occasioned your call upon Him, and ye would forget (the false gods) which ye join with Him!"

42. Before thee We sent (messengers) to many nations, and We afflicted the nations with suffering and adversity, that they might learn humility.

43. When the suffering reached them from us, why then did they not learn humility?(861) On the contrary their hearts became hardened, and Satan made their (sinful) acts seem alluring to them.

861 Sorrow and suffering may (if we take diem rightly) turn out to be the best gifts of Allah to us. According to the Psalms (94:12). "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord!" Through suffering we learn humility, the antidote to many vices and the fountain of many virtues. But if we take them the wrong way, we grumble and complain, we become fainthearted; and Satan gets his opportunity to exploit us by putting forward the alluring pleasures of his Vanity Fair.

44. But when they forgot the warning they had received, We opened to them the gates of all (good) things,(862) until, in the midst of their enjoyment of Our gifts, on a sudden, We called them to account, when lo! they were plunged in despair!

862 Learning the inner truth of ourselves and the world presupposes a certain advanced stage of sensitiveness and spiritual development. There is a shallower stage, at which prosperity and the good things of life may teach us sympathy and goodness and cheerfulness like that of Mr. Cheeribyles in Dickens. In such cases the Message takes root. But there is another type of character which is puffed up in prosperity. For them prosperity is a trial or even a punishment from the higher point of view. They go deeper and deeper into sin, until they are pulled up of a sudden and then instead of being contrite they merely become desperate.

45. Of the wrong-doers the last remnant was cut off. Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher of the worlds.(863)

863 Allah's punishment of wrongdoers is a measure of justice, to protect the true and righteous from their depredations and maintain His righteous decrees. It is an

aspect of His character which is emphasized by the epithet "Cherisher of the Worlds" *(Cf.* 30:59)

46. Say: "Think ye, if Allah took away your hearing and your sight, and sealed up(864) your hearts, who - a god other than Allah - could restore them to you?" See how We explain the signs by various (symbols); yet they turn aside.

864 *Cf.* 2:7 n. 31, and 10:74.

47. Say: "Think ye, if the punishment of Allah comes to you, whether suddenly or openly,(865) will any be destroyed except those who do wrong?

865 *Suddenly* = without warning. *Openly* - with many warnings, even to the sinners, though they heed them not. As to those who understand and read the signs of Allah, they could always tell that all wrongdoing must eventually have its punishment But it will affect the wrongdoers, not the righteous. It is justice, not revenge.

48. We send the messengers only to give good news(866) and to warn: so those who believe and mend (their lives),- upon them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

866 The Prophets are not sent to cancel man's limited free will. They are sent to preach and teach-to preach hope to the repentant ("good news"), and to warn the rebellious of the Wrath to come *(Cf.* 11:31).

49. But those who reject our signs,- them shall punishment touch, for that they ceased not from transgressing.

50. Say: "I tell you not that with me are the treasures of Allah,(867) nor do I know what is hidden, nor do I tell you I am an angel. I but follow what is revealed to me." Say: "can the blind be held equal to the seeing?"(868) Will ye then consider not?

867 Literally, it might mean that the men of Allah are not like vulgar soothsayers, who pretend to reveal hidden treasures, or peer into the future, or claim to be something of a different nature from men. But the meaning is wider: they deal out Allah's great treasures of truth, but the treasures are not theirs, but Allah's; they have greater insight into the higher things, but that insight is not due to their own wisdom, but to Allah's inspiration; they are of the same flesh and blood with us, and the sublimity of their words and teachings arises through Allah's grace-to them and to those who hear them.

868 Therefore compare not the men of Allah ("the seeing") with ordinary men ("the blind"). The men of Allah, although they be but men, have the higher light with them; therefore do not exact of them petty ephemeral services. Though they are men, they are not as other men, and are entitled to reverence.

51. Give this warning to those(869) in whose (hearts) is the fear that they will be brought (to judgment) before their Lord: except for Him they will have no protector nor intercessor: that they may guard (against evil).

869 There are some men, sinners, who yet believe in Judgement; let them be warned of their personal responsibility to guard against evil; let them not rely upon protectors or intercessors before Allah; their sins can only be forgiven by Allah's own Mercy.

52. Send not away those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His face.(870) In naught art thou accountable for them, and in naught are they accountable for thee,(871) that thou shouldst turn them away, and thus be (one) of the unjust.

870 *Face: wajh:* see 2:112, n. 114, and 18:28 . (R).

871 Some of the rich and influential Quray sh thought it beneath their dignity to listen to Muhammad's teaching in company with the lowly disciples, who were gathered round him. But he refused to send away these lowly disciples, who were sincere seekers after Allah. From a worldly point of view they had nothing to gain from Muhammad as he was himself poor, and he had nothing to gain from them as they had no influence. But that was no reason for turning them away; indeed their true sincerity entitled them to precedence over worldly men in the kingdom of Allah , Whose justice was vindicated in Muhammad's daily life in this as in other things. If their sincerity was in any way doubtful, it involved no responsibility for the Preacher.

53. Thus did We try some of them by comparison(872) with others, that they should say: "Is it these then that Allah hath favoured from amongst us?" Doth not Allah know best those who are grateful?

872 Pursue the argument of the last note. The influential people who were not given precedence over the poor and humble but sincere disciples, were on their trial as to their spiritual insight. Their temptation was to say (and they said it in scorn): "We are much greater than they: has Allah then selected these lowly people for His teaching?" But that was so. And Allah knew best those who were grateful to Him for His guidance.

54. When those come to thee who believe in Our signs, Say: "Peace be on you:(873) Your Lord hath inscribed for Himself (the rule(874) of) mercy: verily, if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented, and amend (his conduct), lo! He is Oft- forgiving, Most Merciful.

873 The humble who had sincere faith, were not only not sent away to humour the wealthy: they were honoured and were given a special salutation, which has become the characteristic salutation in Islam: "Peace be on you"-the word peace, *"salam"* having special affinity with the word *"Islam."* In words they are given the salutation; in life they are promised Mercy by the special grace of Allah.

874 *Cf.* 6:12 .

55. Thus do We explain the signs in detail: that the way of the sinners may be shown up.(875)

875 If the way of the sinners (in jealousy and worldly pride) is shown up, and details are given how to honour the truly sincere, it forms the best illustration of the teaching of Allah, *(Cf.* 3:28 , 7:32 , and 7:174).

56. Say:(876) "I am forbidden to worship those - others than Allah - whom ye call upon." Say: "I will not follow your wain desires: If I did, I would stray from the path, and be not of the company of those who receive guidance."

876 There are a number of arguments now put forward against the Makkans who refused to believe in Allah's Message. Each argument is introduced with the word "Say." Here are the first four: (1)I have received Light and will follow it; (2) I prefer my Light to your vain desires; (3) your challenge-"if there is a God, why does He not finish the blasphemers at once?"-it is not for me to take up; punishment rests with Allah; (4) if it rested with me, it would be for me to take up your challenge; all I know is that Allah is not unacquainted with the existence of folly and wickedness, and many other things besides, that no mortal can know; you can see little glimpses of His Plan, and you can be sure that He will not be tardy in calling you to account, *(Cf.* 6:63 and 6:71).

57. Say: "For me, I (work) on a clear sign from my Lord, but ye reject Him. What ye(877) would see hastened, is not in my power. The command rests with none but Allah. He declares the truth, and He is the best of judges."

877 *What ye would see hastened:* what ye, deniers of Allah, are so impatient about, the punishment which ye mockingly say does not come to you. *(Cf.* 8:6).

58. Say: "If what ye would see hastened were in my power, the matter would be settled at once between you and me.(878) But Allah knoweth best those who do wrong."

878 The Messenger of Allah is not here to settle scores with the wicked. It is not a matter between them and him. It is a matter between them and Allah; he is only a warner against sin, and a declarer of the gospel of salvation.

59. With Him are the keys(879) of the unseen, the treasures that none knoweth but He. He knoweth

whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf doth fall but with His knowledge: there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (inscribed) in a record(880) clear (to those who can read).

879 *Mafatih:* Plural of either *miftah* - a key, or *miftah* = a treasure. Both meanings are implied, and I have accordingly put them both in my translation.

880 This is the mystic Record, the archetypal Plan, the Eternal Law, according to which everything seen and unseen is ordered and regulated. The simplest things in Nature are subject to His Law. The fresh and the withered, the living and the lifeless-nothing is outside the Plan of His Creation *(Cf.* 11:6 and 57:4). (R).

60. It is He who doth take your souls by night, and hath knowledge of all that ye have done by day: by day doth He raise you up again; that a term appointed be fulfilled; In the end unto Him will be your return;(881) then will He show you the truth of all that ye did.

881 As the rest of His Creation is subject to His Law and Plan, so is man's life in every particular and at every moment, awake or asleep. The mystery of Sleep-"the twin brother of death"-is called the taking of our soul by Him, with the record of all we have done in our waking moments, and this record sometimes appears to us in confused glimpses in dreams. By day we awaken again to our activities, and so it goes on until we fulfil the term of our life appointed for this earth. Then comes the other Sleep (death), with the longer record of our Day (life); and then, in the end comes the Resurrection and Judgement, at which we see everything clearly and not as in dreams, for that is the final Reality *(Cf.* 39:42)

61. He is the irresistible, (watching) from above over His worshippers, and He sets guardians(882) over you. At length, when death approaches one of you, Our angels(883) take his soul, and they never fail in their duty.

882 *Guardians:* most Commentators understand this to mean guardian angels. The idea of guardianship is expressed in a general term. Allah watches over us and guards us, and provides all kinds of agencies, material, moral, and spiritual, to help our growth and development, keep us from harm, and bring us nearer to our Destiny.

883 *Angels* the word used is *rusul,* the Sent Ones—the same word as for human Messengers sent by Allah to teach mankind. The agents who come to take our souls at death are accurate in the performance of their duty. They come neither before nor after their appointed time, nor do they do it in any manner other than that fixed by the Command of Allah.

62. Then are men returned unto Allah, their protector, the (only) reality: Is not His the command,(884) and He is the swiftest in taking account.

884 *The Reality: Al Haqq,* the Truth, the only True One. The point is that our illusions of the life of this lower world now vanish, when we are rendered back to Allah, from Whom we came. And now we find that far from the results of our actions being delayed, they follow more swiftly than we can express in terms of Time. Here is the answer to the taunt of those who were impatient of the working of Allah's Plans (6:57 -58). (R).

63. Say:(885) "Who is it that delivereth you from the dark recesses(886) of land and sea, when ye call upon Him in humility and silent terror:(887) ´If He only delivers us from these (dangers), (we vow) we shall truly show our gratitude´.?"

885 In continuation of the four heads of argument referred to in n. 876, we have three more heads here in 6:63-65: (5) your calling upon Him in times of danger shows that in the depths of your hearts you feel His need; (6) Allah's Providence saves you, and yet you ungratefully run after false gods; (7) it is not only physical calamities that you have to fear; your mutual discords and vengeances are even more destructive, and only faith in Allah can save you from them *(Cf.* 6:71).

886 *Zulumat:* dark recesses, terrible lurking dangers, as in deserts or mountains, or forests, or seas.

887 There are two readings, but they both ultimately yield the same meaning. (1) *Khufyatan,* silently, secretly, from the depth of your inner heart, suggesting unspeakable terror. (2) *Khifatan,* out of terror or fear or reverence, as in 7:205.

64. Say "It is Allah that delivereth you from these and all (other) distresses: and yet ye worship false gods!"

65. Say: "He hath power to send calamities(888) on you, from above and below, or to cover you with confusion in party strife, giving you a taste of mutual vengeance - each from the other." See how We explain the signs by various (symbols);(889) that they may understand.

888 *Calamities from above and below:* such as storms and blizzards, torrential rain, etc., or earthquakes, floods, landslides, etc *(Cf.* 29:55).

889 *Cf.* 6:46, where this refrain commences the argument now drawing to a close (see also 6:105).

66. But thy people reject this, though it is the truth. Say: "Not mine is the responsibility for arranging your affairs;(890)

890 At the date of this revelation, the Messenger's people had as a body not only rejected Allah's truth, but were persecuting it. The Messenger's duty was to deliver his Message, which he did. He was not responsible for their conduct. But he told them plainly that all warnings from Allah had their time limit, as they would soon find out. And they did find out within a very few years. For the leaders of the resistance came to an evil end, and their whole system of fraud and selfishness was destroyed, to make room for the purer Faith of Islam. Apart from that particular application, there is the more general application for the present time and for all time.

67. For every message is a limit of time, and soon shall ye know it."

68. When thou seest men engaged in vain discourse about Our signs, turn away from them unless they turn to a different(891) theme. If Satan ever makes thee forget, then after recollection, sit not thou in the company of those who do wrong.

891 *Cf.* ; 4:140. If in any gathering truth is ridiculed, we must not sit in such company. If we find ourselves in it, as soon as we realise it, we must show our disapproval by leaving.

69. On their account no responsibility falls on the righteous,(892) but (their duty) is to remind them, that they may (learn to) fear Allah.

892 Every man is responsible for his own conduct But the righteous have two duties: (1) to protect themselves from infection, and (2) to proclaim Allah's truth, for even in the most unlikely circumstances, it is possible that it may have some effect. (R).

70. Leave alone those who take their religion to be mere play and amusement,(893) and are deceived by the life of this world. But proclaim (to them) this (truth): that every soul delivers itself to ruin by its own acts:(894) it will find for itself no protector or intercessor except Allah. if it offered every ransom, (or reparation), none will be accepted: such is (the end of) those who deliver themselves to ruin by their own acts: they will have for drink (only) boiling water, and for punishment, one most grievous: for they persisted in rejecting Allah.

893 *Cf.* 6:32 , where we are told that the life of this world is mere play and amusement, and Religion and the Hereafter are the serious things that require our attention. Worldly people reverse this, because they are deceived by the allurements of this life. But their own acts will find them out.

894 We must never forget our own personal responsibility for all we do, or deceive ourselves by the illusion of vicarious atonement.

71. Say:(895) "Shall we indeed call on others besides Allah,- things that can do us neither good nor harm,- and turn on our heels after receiving guidance from Allah. - like one whom the evil ones have made into a

fool, wandering bewildered through the earth, his friends calling, come to us´, (vainly) guiding him to the path." Say: "(Allah)´s guidance is the (only) guidance, and we have been directed to submit ourselves to the Lord of the worlds;-

895 In continuation of the seven heads of argument referred to in nn. 876 and 885, we have here the final two heads: (8) who would, after receiving guidance from the living, eternal God, turn to lifeless idols? To do so would indeed show that we were made into fools, wandering to a precipice; (9) therefore accept the only true guidance, the guidance of Allah, and obey His Law, for we shall have to answer before His Judgement Seat.

72. "To establish regular prayers and to fear Allah. for it is to Him that we shall be gathered together."

73. It is He who created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions):(896) the day He saith, "Be," behold! it is. His word is the truth. His will be the dominion the day the trumpet will be blown. He knoweth the unseen as well as that which is open. For He is the Wise, well acquainted (with all things).

896 *(Cf.* 29:44). The argument mounts up here, leading to the great insight of Abraham the true in faith, who did not stop short at the wonders of nature, but penetrated "from nature up to nature's God." Allah not only created the heavens and the earth: with every increase of knowledge we see in what true and perfect proportions all Creation is held together. Creatures are subject to Time, but the Creator is not: His word is the key that opens the door of existence. It is not only the starting point of existence, but the whole measure and standard of Truth and Right *(Cf. 1* 4:93). There may possibly be, to our sight in this great world, aberrations of human or other wills, but the moment the trumpet sounds for the last day, His Judgement Seat will, with perfect justice, restore the dominion of Right and Reality. For His Knowledge and Wisdom cover all reality.

74. Lo! Abraham said to his father Azar: "Takest thou idols for gods? For I see thee and thy people in manifest error."

75. So also did We show(897) Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude.

897 Now comes the story of Abraham. He lived among the Chaldeans, who had great knowledge of the stars and heavenly bodies. But he got beyond that physical world and saw the spiritual world behind. His ancestral idols meant nothing to him. That was the first step. But Allah took him many degrees higher. Allah showed him with certitude the spiritual glories behind the magnificent powers and laws of the physical universe.

76. When the night covered him over, He saw a star: He said: "This is my Lord." But when it set, He said: "I love not those that set."(898)

898 This shows the stages of Abraham's spiritual enlightenment It should not be supposed that he literally worshipped stars or heavenly bodies. Having seen through the folly of ancestral idol worship, he began to see the futility of worshipping distant beautiful things that shine, which the vulgar endue with a power which does not reside in them. A type of such is a star shining in the darkness of the night. Superstition might read fortunes in it, but truer knowledge shows that it rises and sets according to laws whose author is Allah. And its light is extinguished in the broader light of day. Its worship is therefore futile. It is not a Power, much less the Supreme Power.

According to some commentators the whole thrust of Abraham's reasoning in verses 76-78 is directed against the superstitious beliefs of his people and demonstrates the folly of worshipping stars and other heavenly bodies. As such his statements may be seen as premises of his arguments against Polytheism rather than as stages in his spiritual enlightenment. (R).

77. When he saw the moon rising in splendour, he said: "This is my Lord." But when the moon set, He said: "unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray."(899)

899 The moon, though it looks bigger and brighter than the star, turns out on closer knowledge, not only to set like the star, but to change its shape from hour to hour, and even to depend for its light on some other body! How deceptive are appearances! This is not Allah! At that stage you begin to search for something more reliable than appearances to the eye in the darkness of the night You ask for guidance from Allah. (R).

78. When he saw the sun rising in splendour, he said: "This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all)." But when the sun set, he said: "O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah.(900)

900 The next stage in the allegory is the sun. You are in the open light of Day. Now you have the right clue. You see the biggest object in the heavens. But is it the biggest? There are thousands of stars in the universe bigger than the sun. And every day the sun appears and disappears from your sight. Such is not God who created you and all these wonderful works of His. What folly to worship creatures, when we might turn to the true God? Let us abjure all these follies and proclaim the one true God.

79. "For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah."

80. His people disputed(901) with him. He said: "(Come) ye to dispute with me, about Allah, when He (Himself) hath guided me? I fear not (the beings) ye associate with Allah. Unless my Lord willeth, (nothing can happen). My Lord comprehendeth in His knowledge all things. Will ye not (yourselves) be admonished?

901 The story of Abraham is highly instructive for all men in quest of truth. If spiritual enlightenment goes so far as to take a man beyond his ancestral worship, people will come to dispute with him. They will frighten him with the dire consequences of his dissent. What does he care? He has found the truth. He is free from superstitious fears, for has he not found the true God, without Whose Will nothing can happen? On the contrary, he knows that it is the godless who have just grounds for fear. And he offers admonition to them, and arguments that should bring them the clearness of truth instead of the vagueness and mystery of superstition-the security of Faith instead of the haunting fear of those who have no clear guidance. (R).

81. "How should I fear (the beings) ye associate with Allah, when ye fear not to give partners to Allah without any warrant having been given to you? Which of (us) two parties hath more right to security? (tell me) if ye know.

82. "It is those who believe and confuse not their beliefs with wrong(901-A) - that are (truly) in security, for they are on (right) guidance."

901-A The word "wrong" here refers to ascribing partners to Allah as has been stated by the Prophet (peace be on him) in his explanation of the verse. [Eds.].

83. That was the reasoning about Us, which We gave to Abraham (to use) against his people:(902) We raise whom We will, degree after degree: for thy Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge.

902 The spiritual education of Abraham raised him many degrees above his contemporaries, and he was expected to use that knowledge and dignity for preaching the truth among his own people.

84. We gave him Isaac and Jacob: all (three) we guided:(903) and before him, We guided Noah,(904) and among his progeny, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron: thus do We reward those who do good:

903 We have now a list of eighteen Prophets in four groups, covering the great Teachers accepted among the three great religions based on Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. The first group to be mentioned is that of Abraham, his son Isaac, and Isaac's son, Jacob. Abraham was the first to have a Book. His Book is mentioned in Q. 87:19, though it is now lost. They were therefore the first to receive Guidance in the sense of a Book.

904 In the second group, we have the great founders of families, apart from Abraham, *viz.,* Noah, of the time of the Flood; David and Solomon, the real establishers of the Jewish monarchy; Job, who lived 140 years, saw four

generations of descendants, and was blessed at the end of his life with large pastoral wealth (Job 42:16, 12); Joseph, who as Minister of State did great things in Egypt and was the progenitor of two Tribes; and Moses and Aaron, the leaders of the Exodus from Egypt. They led active lives and are called "doers of good."

85. And Zakariya and Yahya(905) and Jesus and Elias: all in the ranks of the righteous:

905 The third group consists not of men of action, but Preachers of Truth, who led solitary lives. Their epithet is: "the Righteous." They form a connected group round Jesus. Zakariya was the father of John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus (3:37 -41); and Jesus referred to John the Baptist as Elias: "this is Elias, which was to come" (Matt. 11:14); and Elias is said to have been present and talked to Jesus at the Transfiguration on the Mount (Matt. 17:3). Elias is the same as Elijah *(Cf.* 37:123). (R).

86. And Isma´il and Elisha,(906) and Jonas, and Lot: and to all We gave favour above the nations:

906 This is the last group, described as those "favoured above the nations." It consists of four men who had all great misfortunes to contend with, and were concerned in the clash of nations, but they kept in the path of Allah, and came through above the clash of nations. Isma'il was the eldest son of Abraham; when he was a baby, he and his mother had nearly died of thirst in the desert round Makkah; but they were saved by the well of Zamzam, and he became the founder of the new Arab nation. Elisha (Al Yasa') succeeded to the mantle of the Prophet Elijah (same as Elias, see last note); he lived in troublous times for both the Jewish kingdoms (of Judah and Israel); there were wicked kings, and other nations were pressing in on them; but he performed many miracles, and some check was given to the enemies under his advice. The story of Jonah (Yunus) is well-known: he was swallowed by a fish or whale, but was saved by Allah's mercy: through his preaching, his city (Nineveh) was saved (10:98). Lot was a contemporary and nephew of Abraham: when the city of Sodom was destroyed for its wickedness, he was saved as a just man (7:80-84).

87. (To them) and to their fathers,(907) and progeny and brethren: We chose them, and we guided them to a straight way.

907 1 take verse 87 to refer back to all the four groups just mentioned.

88. This is the guidance of Allah. He giveth that guidance to whom He pleaseth, of His worshippers. If they were to join other gods with Him, all that they did would be vain for them.

89. These were the men to whom We gave the Book, and authority, and prophethood: if these (their descendants) reject them,(908) Behold! We shall entrust their charge to a new people who reject them not.

908 *Them, i.e.,* the Book, and Authority and Prophethood. They were taken away from the other People of the Book and entrusted to the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his People.

90. Those were the (prophets) who received Allah.s guidance: Copy the guidance they received; Say: "No reward for this do I ask of you: This is no less than a message for the nations."

91. No just estimate of Allah(909) do they make when they say: "Nothing doth Allah send down to man (by way of revelation)" Say: "Who then sent down the Book which Moses brought?- a light and guidance to man:(910) But ye make it into (separate) sheets for show,(911) while ye conceal much (of its contents): therein were ye taught that which ye knew not- neither ye nor your fathers." Say: "(Allah) (sent it down)": Then leave them to plunge in vain discourse and trifling.

909 *Qadara:* to weigh, judge, or estimate the value of capacity of anything; to have power so to do. *Cf. Qadir in* 4:149 and n. 655. The Jews who denied the inspiration of Muhammad had a good answer in their own books about the inspiration of Moses. To those who do not believe in Moses, the answer is more general: is it a just estimate of Allah to think either that He has not the power or the will to guide mankind, seeing that He is Omnipotent and the Source of all good? If you say that guidance comes, not through an inspired book or man, but through our general intelligence, we point to the spiritual ignorance of "you and your ancestors" the sad spiritual darkness of men and nations high in the intellectual scale.

910 *Cf.* 5:47 and n. 750, and 5:49 . In those passages Guidance (in practical conduct) is put before Light (or spiritual insight), as they refer to ordinary or average men. Here Light (or spiritual insight) is put first as the question is: does Allah send inspiration?

911 The Message to Moses had unity: it was one Book. The present Old Testament is a collection of odd books ("sheets") of various kinds: see Appendix II, end of S. 5. In this way you can make a show, but there is no unity, and much of the spirit of the original is lost or concealed or overlaid. The same applies to the New Testament: see Appendix III, after Appendix II.

92. And this is a Book which We have sent down, bringing blessings,(912) and confirming (the revelations) which came before it: that thou mayest warn the mother(913) of cities and all around her. Those who believe in the Hereafter believe in this (Book), and they are constant in guarding their prayers.(914)

912 *Mubarak* blessed, as having received Allah's blessing; bringer of blessings to others, as having been blessed by Allah. Allah's highest blessing is the Guidance and Light which the Book brings to us, and which brings us nearer to Him.

913 *Mother of Cities:* Makkah, now the Qiblah and Centre of Islam. If this verse was (like the greater part of the Chapter) revealed in Makkah before the Hijrah, and before Makkah was made the Qiblah of Islam, Makkah was nonetheless the Mother of Cities, being traditionally associated with Abraham and with Adam and Eve (see 2:125, and n. 217 to 2:197).

All round Makkah: would mean, the whole world if we look upon Makkah as the Centre.

914 An earnest study of the Qur'an is true worship; so is Prayer, and so are all deeds of goodness and charity.

93. Who can be more wicked than one who inventeth a lie against Allah, or saith, "I have received inspiration," when he hath received none, or (again) who saith, "I can reveal the like of what Allah hath revealed"? If thou couldst but see how the wicked (do fare) in the flood of confusion at death! - the angels stretch forth their hands, (saying),"Yield up your souls:(915) this day shall ye receive your reward,- a penalty of shame, for that ye used to tell lies against Allah, and scornfully to reject of His signs!"

915 *Yield up your souls:* or "get your souls to come out of your bodies." The wicked, we may suppose, are not anxious to part with the material existence in their bodies for the "reward" which in irony is stated to be there to welcome them.

94. "And behold! ye come to us bare and alone as We created you for the first time:(916) ye have left behind you all (the favours) which We bestowed on you: We see not with you your intercessors whom ye thought to be partners in your affairs: so now all relations between you have been cut off, and your (pet) fancies have left you in the lurch!"(917)

916 Some of the various ideas connected with "Creation" are noted in n. 120 to 2:117. In the creation of man there are various processes. If his body was created out of clay, *i.e.,* earthy matter, there was an earlier process of the creation of such earthy matter. Here the body is left behind, and the soul is being addressed. The soul underwent various processes of fashioning and adapting to its various functions in its various surroundings (32:7-9). But each individual soul, after release from the body, comes back as it was created, with nothing more than its history, "the deeds which it has earned," which are really a part of it. Any exterior things given to help in its development, "the favours which We bestowed on you," it must necessarily leave behind, however it may have been proud of them. These exterior things may be material things, *e.g.,* wealth, property, signs of power, influence and pride such as sons, relatives, and friends, etc., or they may be intangible things, like talents, intellect, social gifts, etc *(Cf.* 7:29 and 6:98).

917 The false ideas of intercessors, demi-gods, gods, saviours, etc., now vanish like unsubstantial visions, "leaving not a wrack behind." Now the soul is face to face with reality. Its personal responsibility is brought home to it.

95. It is Allah Who causeth(918) the seed-grain and the date-stone to split and sprout.(919) He causeth the living to issue from the dead, and He is the one to cause the dead to issue from the living.(920) That is Allah. then how are ye deluded away from the truth?

918 Another beautiful nature passage, referring to Allah's wonderful artistry in His Creation, In how few and how simple words, the whole pageant of Creation is placed before us. Beginning from our humble animal needs and dependence on the vegetable world, we are asked to contemplate the interaction of the living and the dead. Here is mystic teaching, referring not only to physical life but to the higher life above the physical plane - not only to individual life but to the collective life of nations. Then we take a peep into the daily miracle of morning, noon , and night, and pass on to the stars that guide the distant mariner. We rise still higher to the mystery of the countless individuals from the one human soul - their sojourn and their destiny. So we get back to the heavens: the description of the luscious fruits which the "gentle rain from heaven" produces, leaves us to contemplate the spiritual fruits which faith will provide for us, with the aid of the showers of Allah's mercy.

919 The seed grain and the date stone are selected as types in the vegetable kingdom, showing how our physical life depends on it. The fruits mentioned later (in 6:99) start another allegory which we shall notice later. Botanists will notice that the seed grain includes the cereals (such as wheat, barley, rice, millet, etc.) which are monocotyledons, as well as the pulses (such as beans, peas, gram, etc.) and other seeds which are dicotyledons. These two represent the most important classes of food grains, while the date palm, a monocotyledon, represents for Arabia both food, fruit, confectionery, thatch and pillars for houses, shady groves in oases, and a standard measure of wealth and well-being. *" Split and sprout":* both ideas are included in the root *falaqa,* and a third is expressed by the word "cleave" in the next verse, for the action of evolving daybreak from the dark. I might almost have used the word "churn," familiar to students of Hindu lore in the Hindu allegory of the "churning of the ocean." For vegetables, "split and sprout" represents a double process: (1) the seed divides, and (2) one part shoots up, seeking the light, and forming leaves and the visible parts of the future tree, and the other part digs down into the dark, forming the roots and seeking just that sustenance from the soil, which is adapted for the particular plant. This is just one small instance of the "judgement and ordering" of Allah, referred to in the next verse.

920 This does not mean that in physical nature there are no limits between life and non-life, between the organic and the inorganic. In fact physicists are baffled at the barrier between them and frankly confess that they cannot solve the mystery of Life. If there is such a barrier in physical nature, is it not all the more wonderful that Allah can create Life out of nothing? He has but to say, "Be," and it is. He can bring Life from non-Life and annihilate Life. But there are two other senses in which we can contemplate the contrast between the living and the dead. (1) We have just been speaking of the botanical world. Take it as a whole, and see the contrast between the winter of death, the spring of revivification, the summer of growth, and the autumn of decay, leading back to the death of winter. Here is a cycle of living from dead, and dead from living. (2) Take our spiritual life, individual or collective; we rise from the darkness of spiritual nothingness to the light of spiritual life; and if we do not follow the spiritual laws, Allah will take away that life and we shall be again as dead. We may die many deaths. The keys of life and death are in Allah's hands. Neither Life nor Death are fortuitous things. Behind them both is the Cause of Causes - and only He.

96. He it is that cleaveth the day-break (from the dark): He makes the night for rest and tranquillity, and the sun and moon for the reckoning (of time): Such is the judgment(921) and ordering of (Him), the Exalted in Power, the Omniscient.

921 The night, the day, the sun, the moon - the great astronomical universe of Allah. How far, and yet how near to us! Allah's universe is boundless, and we can barely comprehend even its relations to us. But this last we must try to do if we want to be numbered with "the people who know." *Taqdir: Cf.* 6:91 and n. 909, and 4:149 and n. 655.

97. It is He Who maketh the stars (as beacons) for you, that ye may guide yourselves, with their help, through the dark spaces of land and sea:(922) We detail Our signs for people who know.

922 See the last note. At sea, or in deserts or forests, or "in fairy scenes forlorn"- whenever we sweep over wide spaces, it is the stars that act as our guides, just as the sun and moon have already been mentioned as our measures of time.

98. It is He Who hath produced you(923) from a single person: here is a place of sojourn and a place of departure:(924) We detail Our signs for people who understand.

923 *Produced: an sh a'a* = made you grow, increase, develop, reach maturity: another of the processes of creation. This supplements n. 120 to 2:117 and n. 916 to 6:94. It is one of the wonders of Allah's Creation, that from one person we have grown to be so many, and each individual has so many faculties and capacities, and yet we are all one. In the next verse we have the allegory of grapes and other fruits: all grapes may be similar to look at, yet each variety has a distinctive flavour and other distinctive qualities, and each individual grape may have its own special qualities. So for man.

924 In the sojourn of this life we must respond to Allah's hand in fashioning us, by making full use of all our faculties, and we must get ready for our departure into the Life that will be eternal.

99. It is He Who sendeth down rain from the skies:(925) with it We produce vegetation of all kinds: from some We produce green (crops), out of which We produce grain, heaped up (at harvest); out of the date-palm and its sheaths (or spathes) (come) clusters of dates hanging low and near: and (then there are) gardens of grapes, and olives, and pomegranates, each similar (in kind) yet different (in variety):(926) when they begin to bear fruit, feast your eyes with the fruit and the ripeness thereof.(927) Behold! in these things there are signs for people who believe.(928)

925 Our allegory now brings us to maturity, the fruit, the harvest, the vintage. Through the seed we came up from nothingness of life; we lived our daily life of rest and work and passed the milestones of time; we had the spiritual experience of traversing through vast spaces in the spiritual world, guiding our course through the star of Faith; we grew; and now for the harvest or the vintage! So will man if he has produced the fruits of Faith!

926 Each fruit-whether it is grapes, or olives, or pomegranates-looks alike in its species, and yet each variety may be different in flavour, consistency, shape, size, colour, juice or oil contents, proportion of seed to fruit, etc. In each variety individuals may be different. Apply the allegory to man, whose varied spiritual fruit may be equally different and yet equally valuable! *(Cf.* 6:141).

927 And so we finish this wonderful allegory. Search through the world's literature, and see if you can find another such song or hymn—so fruity in its literary flavour, so profound in its spiritual meaning!

928 There is a refrain in this song, which is subtly varied. In verse 97 it is: "We detail our Signs for people who *know."* So far we were speaking of the things we see around us everyday. Knowledge is the appropriate instrument for these things. In verse 98 we read: "We detail Our Signs for people who *understand."* Understanding is a higher faculty than knowledge, and is necessary for seeing the mystery and meaning of this life. At the end of verse 99 we have: "In these things there are Signs for people who *believe."* Here we are speaking of the real fruits of spiritual life. For them Faith is necessary, as bringing us nearer to Allah.

100. Yet they make the Jinns equals(929) with Allah, though Allah did create the Jinns; and they falsely, having no knowledge, attribute to Him sons and daughters. Praise and glory be to Him! (for He is) above what they attribute to Him!

929 *Jinns:* who are they? In 18:50 we are told that Iblis was one of the Jinns, and it is suggested that that was why he disobeyed the Command of Allah. But in that passage and other similar passages, we are told that Allah commanded the angels to bow down to Adam, and they obeyed except Iblis. That implies that Iblis had been of the company of angels. In many passages Jinns and men are spoken of together. In 55:14-15, man is stated to have been created from clay, while Jinns from a flame of fire. The root meaning *of junna, yujannu,* is "to be covered or hidden," and *janna yajunnu,* in the active voice, "to cover or hide," as in 6:76- Some people say *that jinn* therefore means the hidden qualities or capacities in man; others that it means wild or jungle folk hidden in the hills or forests. I do not wish to be dogmatic, but I think, from a collation and study of the Quranic passages, that the meaning is simply "a spirit," or an invisible or hidden force. In folklore stories and romances like the Arabian Nights they become personified into fantastic forms, but with them we are not concerned here. Both the Qur'an and the Hadith describe the Jinn as a definite species of living beings. They are created out of fire and are like man, may believe or disbelieve, accept or reject guidance. The authoritative Islamic texts show that they are not merely a hidden force, or a

spirit. They are personalized beings who enjoy a certain amount of free will and thus will be called to account. (Eds.).

101. To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth:(930) How can He have a son when He hath no consort? He created all things, and He hath full knowledge of all things.

930 *Cf.* 2:117 and n. 120.

102. That is Allah, your Lord! there is no god but He, the Creator of all things: then worship ye Him: and He hath power to dispose of all affairs.

103. No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension,(931) yet is acquainted with all things.

931 *Latif:* fine, subtle, so fine and subtle as to be invisible to the physical eye; so fine as to be imperceptible to the senses; so pure as to be above the mental or spiritual vision of men. The active meaning should also be understood: 'one who understands the finest mysteries.' *Cf.* 22:63, and n. 2844.

104. "Now have come to you, from your Lord, proofs (to open your eyes): if any will see, it will be for (the good of) his own soul; if any will be blind, it will be to his own (harm): I am not (here) to watch over your doings."(932)

932 I understand "Say" to be understood in the beginning of this verse. The words would then be the words of the Prophet, as in fact is suggested in verse 107 below. That is why I have enclosed them in inverted commas.

105. Thus do we explain the signs by various (symbols):(933) that they may say, "Thou hast taught (us) diligently," and that We may make the matter clear to those who know.(934)

933 *Cf.* 6:65 and n. 889.

934 The teaching in the Qur'an explains things by various symbols, parables, narratives, and appeals to nature. Each time, a new phase of the question is presented to our minds. This is what a diligent and earnest teacher would do, such as was Muhammad Mustafa. Those who were in search of knowledge and had thus acquired some knowledge of spiritual things were greatly helped to understand more clearly the things of which, before the varied explanations, they had only one-sided knowledge.

106. Follow what thou art taught by inspiration from thy Lord: there is no god but He: and turn aside from those who join gods with Allah.

107. If it had been Allah's plan,(935) they would not have taken false gods: but We made thee not one to watch over their doings, nor art thou set over them to dispose of their affairs.

935 Allah's Plan is to use the human will to cooperate in understanding Him and His relations to us. This is the answer to an objector who might say: "If He is All-Powerful, why does sin or evil exist in the world? Can He not destroy it?" He can, but His Plan is different, and in any case it is not for a Teacher to force anyone to accept the truths which he is inspired to preach and proclaim.

108. Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people(936) its own doings. In the end will they return to their Lord, and We shall then tell them the truth of all that they did.

936 A man's actual personal religion depends upon many things: his personal psychology, the background of his life, his hidden or repressed feelings, tendencies, or history (which psychoanalysis tries to unravel), his hereditary dispositions or antipathies, and all the subtle influences of his education and his environment. The task before the man of God is: (1) to use any of these which can subserve the higher ends; (2) to purify such as have been misused; (3) to introduce new ideas and modes of looking at things; and (4) to combat what is wrong and cannot be mended-all for the purpose of leading to the truth and gradually letting in spiritual light where there was darkness before. If that is not done with discretion and the skill of a spiritual Teacher, there may be not only a reaction of obstinacy, but an unseemly show of dishonour to the true God and His Truth, and doubts would spread among the weaker brethren whose faith is shallow and infirm. What happens to individuals is true collectively of nations or groups of people. They think in their self-obsession that their own ideas are right. Allah in His infinite compassion bears with them, and asks those who have purer ideas of faith not to vilify the weaknesses of their neighbours, lest the neighbours in their turn vilify the real truth and make matters even worse than before. Insofar as there are mistakes, Allah will forgive and send His grace for helping ignorance and folly. Insofar as there is active evil, He will deal with it in His own way. Of course the righteous man must not hide his light under a bushel, or compromise with evil, or refuse to establish right living where he has the power to do so.

109. They swear their strongest oaths by Allah, that if a (special) sign came to them, by it they would believe. Say: "Certainly (all) signs are in the power of Allah. but what will make you (Muslims) realise that (even) if (special) signs came, they will not believe"?(937)

937 If the unbelievers are merely obstinate, nothing will convince them. There is no story more full of miracles than the story of Jesus. Yet in that same story we are told that Jesus said: "A wicked adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonah": Matt. 16:4. There are Signs given by Allah everyday-understood by those who believe. A mere insistence upon some particular or special Sign means mere contumacy and misunderstanding of the spiritual world.

110. We (too) shall turn to (confusion) their hearts(938) and their eyes, even as they refused to believe in this in the first instance: We shall leave them in their trespasses, to wander in distraction.(939)

938 Where there is sheer obstinacy and ridicule of faith, the result will be that such a sinner's heart will be hardened and his eyes will be sealed, so that he cannot even see the things visible to ordinary mortals. The sinner gathers impetus in his descent towards wrong.

939 *Cf.* 2:15 . Allah's grace is always ready to help human weakness or ignorance, and to accept repentance and give forgiveness. But where the sinner is in actual rebellion, he will be given rope, and it will be his own fault if he wanders about distractedly, without any certain hope or refuge.

111. Even if We did send unto them angels, and the dead did speak unto them, and We gathered together all things before(940) their very eyes, they are not the ones to believe, unless it is in Allah.s plan. But most of them ignore (the truth).

940 The most stupendous miracles even according to their ideas would not have convinced them. If the whole pageant of the spiritual world were brought before them, they would not have believed, because they-of their own choice and will-refuse knowledge and faith.

112. Likewise did We make for every Messenger an enemy,- evil ones(941) among men and jinns, inspiring each other with flowery discourses by way of deception. If thy Lord had so planned, they would not have done it: so leave them and their inventions alone.

941 What happened in the history of the Holy Prophet happens in the history of all righteous men who have a Message from Allah. The spirit of evil is ever active and uses men to practise deception by means of highly embellished words and plausible excuses and objections. Allah permits these things in His Plan. It is not for us to complain. Our faith is tested, and we must stand the test steadfastily.

113. To such (deceit) let the hearts of those incline, who have no faith in the hereafter: let them delight in it, and let them earn from it what they may.(942)

942 People who have no faith in the future destiny of man listen to and are taken in by the deceit of evil. If they take a delight in it, let them. See what they gain by it. Their gains will be as deceitful as their delight. For the end of evil must be evil.

114. Say: "Shall I seek for judge other than Allah. - when He it is Who hath sent unto you the Book, explained in

detail."(943) They know full well, to whom We have given the Book, that it hath been sent down from thy Lord in truth. Never be then of those who doubt.

943 The righteous man seeks no other standard of judgement but Allah's Will. How can he, when Allah in His grace has explained His Will in the Qur'an, with details which men of every capacity can understand? The humblest can learn lessons of right conduct in daily life, and the most advanced can find the highest wisdom in its spiritual teaching, enriched as it is with all kinds of beautiful illustrations from nature and the story of man.

115. **The word of thy Lord doth find its fulfilment in truth and in justice: None can change His words: for He is the one who heareth and knoweth all.**

116. **Wert thou to follow the common run of those on earth, they will lead thee away from the way of Allah. They follow nothing but conjecture: they do nothing but lie.**

117. **Thy Lord knoweth best who strayeth from His way: He knoweth best who they are that receive His guidance.**

118. **So eat of (meats) on which Allah.s name hath been pronounced, if ye have faith in His signs.**

119. **Why should ye not eat of (meats) on which Allah.s name hath been pronounced, when He hath explained to you in detail what is forbidden to you - except under compulsion(944) of necessity? But many do mislead (men) by their appetites unchecked by knowledge. Thy Lord knoweth best those who transgress.**

944 *Cf.* 5:4. When a clear law has explained what is lawful and unlawful in food, it is wrong to raise fresh scruples and mislead the ignorant *(Cf.* see also 5:3 and 16:115).

120. **Eschew all sin, open or secret: those who earn sin will get due recompense for their "earnings."**

121. **Eat not of (meats) on which Allah.s name hath not been pronounced: That would be impiety. But the evil ones ever inspire their friends to contend with you if ye were to obey them, ye would indeed be Pagans.**

122. **Can he who was dead,(945) to whom We gave life, and a light whereby he can walk amongst men, be like him who is in the depths of darkness, from which he can never come out? Thus to those without faith their own deeds seem pleasing.**

945 Here is an allegory of the good man with his divine mission and the evil man with his mission of evil. The former, before he got his spiritual life, was like one dead. It was Allah's grace that gave him spiritual life, with a Light by which he could walk and guide his own footsteps as well as the footsteps of those who are willing to follow Allah's light. The opposite type is that which hates Allah's light, which lives in the depths of darkness, and which plots and burrows against all that is good. But the plots of evil recoil on itself, although it thinks that mey will hurt the good. Can these two types be for a moment compared with each other? Perhaps the lead in every centre of populations is taken by the men of evil. But file good men should not be discouraged. They should work in righteousness and fulfil their mission.

123. **Thus have We placed leaders in every town, its wicked men, to plot (and burrow) therein: but they only plot against their own souls, and they perceive it not.**

124. **When there comes to them a sign (from Allah., They say: "We shall not believe until we receive one (exactly) like those received by Allah's messengers."(946) Allah knoweth best where (and how) to carry out His mission. Soon will the wicked be overtaken by humiliation before Allah, and a severe punishment, for all their plots.**

946 Besides the teaching in Allah's Word, and the teaching in Allah's world, of nature and history and human contacts, many Signs come to the men of God, which they humbly receive and try to understand; and many Signs also come to the ungodly, in the shape of warnings or otherwise, which the ungodly either do not heed, or deliberately reject. The Signs in the two cases are not the same, and that becomes one of their perverse arguments against faith. But Allah's working will be according to His own Will and Plan, and not according to the wishes or whims of the ungodly (*Cf.* 29:50-51).

125. **Those whom Allah (in His plan) willeth to guide,- He openeth(947) their breast to Islam; those whom He willeth to leave straying,- He maketh their breast close and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies: thus doth Allah (heap) the penalty on those who refuse to believe.**

947 Allah's Universal Plan is the *Qada wa Qadr,* which is so much misunderstood. That Plan is unalterable, and that is His Will. It means that in the spiritual world, as in the physical world, there are laws of justice, mercy, grace, penalty, etc., which work as surely as anything we know. If, then, a man refuses Faith, becomes a rebel, with each step he goes further and further down, and his pace will be accelerated; he will scarcely be able to take spiritual breath, and his recovery-in spite of Allah's mercy which he has rejected-will be as difficult as if he had to climb up to the skies. On the other hand, the godly will find, with each step, the next step easier. Jesus expressed this truth paradoxically: "He that hath, to him shall be given; but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath": Mark. 4:25. John (6:65) makes Jesus say: "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."

126. **This is the way of thy Lord, leading straight: We have detailed the signs for those who receive admonition.**

127. **For them will be a home(948) of peace in the presence of their Lord: He will be their friend, because they practised (righteousness).**

948 *Cf.* 10:25 .

128. **One day will He gather them all together, (and say): "O ye assembly of Jinns!(949) Much (toll) did ye take of men." Their friends amongst men will say: "Our Lord! we made profit(950) from each other: but (alas!) we reached our term - which thou didst appoint for us." He will say: "The Fire be your dwelling-place: you will dwell therein for ever, except as Allah willeth."(951) for thy Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge.**

949 Jinns are spirits-here evil spirits. See 6:100, n. 929.

950 It is common experience that the forces of evil make an alliance with each other, and seem thus to make a profit by their mutual log-rolling. But this is only in this material world. When the limited term expires, their unholy bargains will be exposed, and there will be nothing but regrets.

951 Eternity and infinity are abstract terms. They have no precise meaning in our human experience. The qualification, "except as Allah willeth," makes it more intelligible, as we can form some idea-howev-er sinadequate-of a Will and Plan, and we know Allah by His attribute of Mercy as well as of justice.

129. **Thus do we make the wrong-doers turn to each other, because of what they earn.(952)**

952 See n. 950 above. Evil consorts with evil because of their mutual bargains. But in doing so they save the righteous from further temptation.

130. **"O ye assembly of Jinns and men! came there not unto you messengers from amongst you,(953) setting forth unto you My signs, and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?" They will say: "We bear witness against ourselves." It was the life of this**

world that deceived them. So against themselves will they bear witness that they rejected Faith.

953 *Messengers from amongst you.* This is addressed to the whole gathering of men and Jinns. (R).

131. (The messengers were sent) thus, for thy Lord would not destroy for their wrong-doing men´s habitations whilst their occupants were unwarned.

132. To all are degrees (or ranks)(954) according to their deeds: for thy Lord is not unmindful of anything that they do.

954 On good and evil there are infinite degrees, in our deeds and motives: so will there be degrees in our spiritual position. For everything is known to Allah, better than it is to ourselves.

133. Thy Lord is self-sufficient,(955) full of Mercy: if it were His will, He could destroy you, and in your place appoint whom He will as your successors, even as He raised you up from the posterity of other people.

955 Allah is not dependent on our prayer or service. It is out of His Mercy that He desires our own good. Any race or people to whom He gives chances should understand that its failure does not affect Allah. He could create others in their place, as He did in times past, and is doing in our own day, if only we had the wit to see it.

134. All that hath been(956) promised unto you will come to pass: nor can ye frustrate it (in the least bit).

956 Both the good news and the warning which Allah's messengers came to give will be fulfilled. Nothing can stop Allah's Universal Plan. See n. 947 to 6:125.

135. Say: "O my people! Do whatever ye cans:(957) I will do (my part): soon will ye know who it is whose end will be (best) in the Hereafter: certain it is that the wrong- doers will not prosper."

957 Insofar as this is addressed to the Unbelievers it is a challenge: "Do your utmost; nothing will deter me from my duty: we shall see who wins in the end." Passing from the particular occasion, we can understand it in a more general sense, which is true for all time. Let the evil ones do their worst. Let those who believe do all they can, according to their opportunities and abilities. The individual must do the straight duty that lies before him. In the end Allah will judge, and His judgement is always true and just *(Cf.* 28:37).

136. Out of what Allah hath produced in abundance in tilth and in cattle, they assigned Him a share: they say, according to their fancies:(958) "This is for Allah, and this" - for our "partners"! but the share of their" partners "reacheth not Allah, whilst the share of Allah reacheth their "partners" ! evil (and unjust) is their assignment!

958 There is scathing sarcasm here, which some of the commentators have missed. The Pagans have generally a big Pantheon, though above it they have a vague idea of a Supreme God. But the material benefits go to the godlings, the fancied "partner" of Allah; for they have temples, priests, dedications, etc., while the True and Supreme God has only lip-worship, or at best a share with numerous "partners." This was so in Arabia also. The shares assigned to the "partners" went to the priests and hangers-on of the "partners", who were many and clamorous for their rights. The share assigned to Allah possibly went to the poor, but more probably went to the priests who had the cult of the "partners", for the Supreme God had no separate priests of His own. It is also said that when heaps were thus laid out, if any portion of Allah's heap fell into the heaps of the "partners" the priests greedily and promptly appropriated it, while in the contrary case the "partners" priests were careful to reclaim any portion from what they called "Allah's heap." The absurdity of the whole thing is ridiculed. Allah created everything: how can He have a *share?*

137. Even so, in the eyes of most of the pagans,(959) their "partners" made alluring the slaughter of their children, in order to lead them to their own destruction, and cause confusion in their religion. If Allah had willed, they would not have done so: But leave alone them and their inventions.

959 The false gods and idols-among many nations, including the Arabs-were supposed to require human sacrifices. Ordinarily such sacrifices are revolting to man, but they are made "alluring"-a sacred rite-by Pagan custom, which falsely arrogates to itself the name of religion. Such customs, if allowed, would do nothing but destroy the people who practise them, and make their religion but a confused bundle of revolting superstitions.

138. And they say that such and such cattle and crops(960) are taboo, and none should eat of them except those whom - so they say - We wish; further, there are cattle forbidden to yoke(961) or burden, and cattle on which, (at slaughter), the name of Allah is not(962) pronounced; - inventions against Allah.s name: soon will He requite them for their inventions.

960 A taboo of certain foods is sometimes a device of the priesthood to get special things for itself. It has to be enforced by pretending that the prohibition for others is by the Will of Allah. It. is a lie or invention against Allah-most superstitions are.

961 Cattle dedicated to heathen gods may be reserved from all useful work; in that case they are a dead loss to the community, and they may, besides, do a great deal of damage to fields and crops.

962 If meat is killed in the name of heathen gods, it would naturally not be killed by the solemn rite in Allah's name, by which alone the killing can be justified for food. See nn. 698-699.

139. They say: "What is in the wombs of such and such cattle is specially reserved (for food) for our men, and forbidden to our women; but if it is still-born, then all have shares therein.(963) For their (false) attribution (of superstitions to Allah., He will soon punish them: for He is full of wisdom and knowledge.

963 These are further Pagan superstitions about cattle. Some have already been noted in 5:103, which may be consulted with the notes.

140. Lost are those who slay their children, from folly, without knowledge, and forbid food which Allah hath provided for them, inventing (lies) against Allah. They have indeed gone astray and heeded no guidance.

141. It is He Who produceth(964) gardens, with trellises and without, and dates, and tilth with produce of all kinds, and olives and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in variety):(965) eat of their fruit in their season, but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered. But waste not(966) by excess: for Allah loveth not the wasters.

964 *Ansha'a:* see 6:98, n. 923.

965 A beautiful passage, with music to match the meaning. *Cf.* 6:99 and notes.

966 "Waste not, want not," says the English proverb. Here the same wisdom is preached from a higher motive. See what magnificent means Allah provides in nature for the sustenance of all His creatures, because He loves them all. Enjoy them in moderation and be grateful. But commit no excess, and commit no waste: the two things are the same from different angles of vision. If you do, you take away something from other creatures and Allah would not like your selfishness.

142. Of the cattle are some for burden and some for meat:(967) eat what Allah hath provided for you, and follow not the footsteps of Satan: for he is to you and avowed enemy.

967 Superstition kills true religion. We come back to the Arab Pagan superstitions about cattle for food. The horse is not mentioned, because horse flesh was not an article of diet and there were no superstitions about it. Sheep and goats, camels and oxen were the usual sources of meat. Sheep and goats were not used as beasts of burden, but camels (of both sexes) were used for carrying burdens, and oxen for the plough, though cows were mainly used for milk and meat. The words "some for burden and some for meat" do not differentiate whole species, except that they give you the first two and the last two as categories.

143. (Take) eight (head of cattle)(968) in (four) pairs: of sheep a pair, and of goats a pair; say, hath He forbidden the two males, or the two females, or (the young) which the wombs of the two females enclose? Tell me with knowledge if ye are truthful:

968 The superstitions referred to in 6:139 and 5:103 are further ridiculed in this verse and the next.

144. Of camels a pair, and oxen a pair; say, hath He forbidden the two males, or the two females, or (the young) which the wombs of the two females enclose? - Were ye present when Allah ordered you such a thing? But who doth more wrong than one who invents a lie against Allah, to lead astray men without knowledge? For Allah guideth not people who do wrong.

145. Say: "I find not in the message received by me by inspiration any (meat) forbidden to be eaten by one who wishes to eat it, unless it be dead meat, or blood poured forth,(969) or the flesh of swine,- for it is an abomination - or, what is impious, (meat) on which a name has been invoked, other than Allah.s". But (even so), if a person is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits,- thy Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

969 *Blood poured forth:* as distinguished from blood adhering to flesh, or the liver, or such other internal organs purifying the blood.

146. For those who followed the Jewish Law, We forbade every (animal) with undivided hoof,(970) and We forbade them that fat of the ox(971) and the sheep, except what adheres to their backs or their entrails, or is mixed up with a bone: this in recompense for their wilful disobedience: for We are true (in Our ordinances).

970 Zufur may mean claw or hoof; it is in the singular number; but as no animal has a single claw, and there is no point in a division of claws, we must look to a hoof for the correct interpretation. In the Jewish Law, (Leviticus. 11:3-6), "whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is cloven footed, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts" was lawful as food, but the camel, the coney (rabbit), and the hare were not lawful, because they do not "divide the hoof. Undivided hoof therefore is the correct interpretation. These three animals, unlawful to the Jews, are lawful in Islam. *Cf.* 4:160.

971 In Leviticus, (7:23) it is laid down that "ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat." As regards the exceptions, it is to be noticed that priests were enjoined (Leviticus. 7:6) to eat of the fat in the trespass offering, which was considered holy, *viz.,* "the rump" (back and bone) "and the fat that covereth the inwards" (entrails), (Leviticus, 7:3).

147. If they accuse thee of falsehood, say: "Your Lord is full of mercy all- embracing; but from people in guilt never will His wrath be turned back.

148. Those who give partners (to Allah. will say: "If Allah had wished, we should not have given partners to Him nor would our fathers; nor should we have had(972) any taboos." So did their ancestors argue falsely, until they tasted of Our wrath. Say: "Have ye any (certain) knowledge? If so, produce it before us. Ye follow nothing but conjecture: ye do nothing but lie."

972 As used by the Pagans, the argument is false, for it implies (a) that men have no personal responsibility, (b) that they are the victims of a Determinism against which they are helpless, and (c) that they might therefore go on doing just what they liked. It is also inconsistent, for if (b) is true, (c) cannot be true. Nor is it meant to be taken seriously.

149. Say: "With Allah is the argument(973) that reaches home: if it had been His will, He could indeed have guided you all."

973 On the other hand, the argument cuts true and deep, as from Allah to His creatures. Allah is Omnipotent, and can do all that we can conceive. But He, in His Plan, has given man some responsibility, and some choice in order to train man's will. If man fails, he is helped in various ways by Allah's mercy and grace. But man cannot go on sinning, and in a state of sin, expect Allah to be pleased with him (6:147).

150. Say: "Bring forward your witnesses to prove that Allah did forbid so and so." If they bring such witnesses, be not thou amongst them(974): Nor follow thou the vain desires of such as treat our signs as falsehoods, and such as believe not in the Hereafter: for they hold others as equal with their Guardian-Lord.(975)

974 The Pagan superstitions were of course baseless, and in many cases harmful and debasing. If Allah's name was taken as supporting them, no true man of God could be taken in, or join in support simply because Allah's name was taken in vain.

975 *Cf.* 6:1. Allah, who created and who cherishes and cares for all, should have the first claim on our attention. Those who set up false gods fail to understand Allah's true governance or their own true destiny.

151. Say: "Come, I will rehearse what Allah hath (really)(976) prohibited you from": Join not anything as equal with Him; be good to your parents; kill not your children on a plea of want;- We provide sustenance for you and for them;- come not nigh to shameful deeds. Whether open or secret; take not life, which Allah hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law:(977) thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom.

976 Instead of following Pagan superstitions, and being in constant terror of imaginary taboos and prohibitions, we should study the true moral law, whose sanction is Allah's Law. The first step is that we should recognise that He is the One and Only Lord and Cherisher. The mention of goodness to parents immediately afterwards suggests: (1) that Allah's love of us and care for us may—on an infinitely higher plane—be understood by our ideal of parental love, which is purely unselfish; (2) that our first duty among our fellow creatures is to our father and mother, whose love leads us to the conception of divine love. Arising from that is the conception of our converse duties to our children. Allah provides sustenance (material and spiritual) not only for us, but for them; hence any custom like the Pagan custom of sacrificing children to Moloch stands condemned. Then come the moral prohibitions against lewdness and all unseemly acts, relating to sex or otherwise, open or secret. This is followed by the prohibition of killing or fighting. All these things are conformable to our own interests, and therefore true wisdom from our own point of view.

977 For the comprehensive word, *haqq,* I have used the two words, "justice and law": other significations implied are: right, truth, what is becoming, etc. It is not only that human life is sacred, but all life is sacred. Even in killing animals for food, a dedicatory formula "in the name of Allah" has to be employed, to make it lawful: see n. 698 to 5:4 and n. 962 to 6:138.

152. And come not nigh to the orphan´s property, except to improve it, until he attain the age of full strength; give measure and weight with (full) justice;- no burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear;- whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned; and fulfil the covenant of Allah;(978) thus doth He command you, that ye may remember.

978 *Cf.* 5:1 and n 682.

153. Verily, this is My way, leading straight: follow it: follow not (other) paths: they will scatter you about from His (great) path: thus doth He command you. that ye may be righteous.(979)

979 Note again the refrain with variations, in 6:151, 152 and 153. In verse 151, we have the moral law, which it is for our own good to follow: "Thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom:" In verse 152, we have to deal justly and rightly with others; we are apt to think too much of ourselves and forget others: "Thus doth He command you, that ye may remember:" In verse 153 our attention is called to the Straight Way, the Way of Allah, the only Way that leads to righteousness: "Thus doth He command you, that ye may be righteous."

154. Moreover, We gave Moses the Book, completing (Our favour) to those who would do right, and explaining all things(980) in detail,- and a guide and a mercy, that they might believe in the meeting with their Lord.

980 The revelation to Moses went into the details of people's lives, and thus served as a practical guide to the Jews and after them to the Christians. Admittedly the Message delivered by Christ dealt with general principles only and in no way with details. The message of Islam as in the Qur'an is the next complete guide in point of time after that of Moses.

155. And this is a Book which We have revealed as a blessing: so follow it and be righteous, that ye may receive mercy:

156. Lest ye should say: "The Book was sent down to two Peoples before us, and for our part, we remained unacquainted(981) with all that they learned by assiduous study:"

981 Because the diligent studies of the earlier People of the Book were in languages foreign to the new People of Islam, or because they were meant for circumstances different from those of the new world after Islam.

157. Or lest ye should say: "If the Book had only been sent down to us, we should have followed its guidance better than they." Now then hath come unto you a clear (sign)(982) from your Lord,- and a guide and a mercy: then who could do more wrong than one who rejecteth Allah.s signs, and turneth away therefrom? In good time shall We requite those who turn away from Our signs, with a dreadful penalty, for their turning away.

982 The Qur'an and the life and the teaching of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah.

158. Are they waiting to see if the angels come to them, or thy Lord (Himself), or certain of the signs of thy Lord! the day that certain of the signs of thy Lord do come, no good will it do to a soul(983) to believe in them then if it believed not before nor earned righteousness through its faith. Say: "Wait ye: we too are waiting."(984)

983 There is no merit in faith in things that you are compelled to acknowledge when they actually happen. Faith is belief in things which you do no see with your eyes but you understand with your spiritual sense: if your whole will consents to it, it results in deeds of righteousness, which are the evidence of your faith (*Cf.* 10:20).

984 The waiting in the two cases is in quite different senses: the foolish man without faith is waiting for things which will not happen, and is surprised by the real things which do happen; the righteous man of faith is waiting for the fruits of righteousness, of which he has an assured hope; in a higher state of spiritual elevation, even the fruits have no personal meaning to him, for Allah is to him All-in-All: (*Cf.* 6:162 and 9:52).

159. As for those who divide(985) their religion and break up into sects, thou hast no part in them in the least: their affair is with Allah. He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did.

985 *Divide their religion: (farraqu) i.e.,* (1) make a distinction between one part of it and another, take the part which suits them and reject the rest; or (2) have religion one day of the week and the world the rest of the six days; or (3) keep "religion in its right place," as if it did not claim to govern the whole life; make a sharp distinction between the secular and the religious, or (4) show a sectarian bias, seek differences in views, so as to break up the unity of Islam.

160. He that doeth good shall have ten times as much to his credit: He that doeth evil shall only be recompensed according to his evil:(986) no wrong shall be done unto (any of) them.

986 Allah is just as well as generous. To the good, the reward is multiplied ten times *(i.e.,* far above merits) on account of His generosity. To the evil, the punishment is no more than commensurate with their sin, and even so the door of mercy is always open to those who sincerely repent and show it by their conduct *(Cf.* 7:38).

161. Say: "Verily, my Lord hath guided me to a way that is straight,- a religion of right,- the path (trod) by Abraham the true in Faith, and he (certainly) joined not gods with Allah."

162. Say: "Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds:

163. No partner hath He: this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who bow to His will.

164. Say: "Shall I seek for (my) Cherisher other than Allah, when He is the Cherisher of all things (that exist)? Every soul draws the meed of its acts on none(987) but itself: no bearer of burdens can bear of burdens can bear the burden of another. Your goal in the end is towards Allah. He will tell you the truth of the things wherein ye disputed."

987 The doctrine of personal responsibility again. We are fully responsible for our acts ourselves, we cannot transfer the consequences to someone else. Nor can anyone vicariously atone for our sins. If people have honest doubts or differences about important questions of religion, they should not start futile disputes. All will be clear in the end. Our duty here is to maintain unity and discipline, and do the duty that comes to us *(Cf.* 16:25 , 35:18, and 53:38-40).

165. It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors(988) of the earth: He hath raised you in ranks, some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He hath given you: for thy Lord is quick in punishment: yet He is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

988 *Cf.* 2:30 and n., where I have translated "Khalifah" as "Vicegerent", it being Allah's Plan to make Adam (as representing mankind) His vicegerent on earth. In C. 1, I have construed the same word by the word "Agent." Another idea implied in "Khalifah" is that of "successor, heir, or inheritor," *i.e.,* one who has the ultimate ownership after the present possessors, to whom a life tenancy has been given by the owner, have passed away. In 15:23 occurs the striking word, "heirs" *(warithun),* applied to Allah: "We give life and death, and We are the Heirs (or Inheritors)." The same idea occurs in 3:180, where see n, 485, and 19:40. The translation here attempts to express both the ideas which I understand from the original.

7. Al A'raf (The Heights)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Alif, Lam, Mim, Sad.(989)

989 This is a combination of four Abbreviated Letters. For Abbreviated Letters generally, see Appendix I (at the end of Surah 2). The combination here includes the three letters *Alif, Lam, Mim,* which occurred at the beginning of Surah 2, and are discussed in n. 25 to 2:1.

The additional letter *Sad* occurs in combination here and in Surah 19, and by itself at the beginning of S. 38, and nowhere else. The factor common to S. *1,* S. 19, and S. 38 is that in each case the core of the Surah consists in the stories *(qasas)* of the Prophets. In this Surah we have the stories of Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot , Shu'ayb, and Moses, leading up to Muhammad, and in S. 38, the stories of David, Solomon, and Job similarly lead up to Muhammad, occupying three out of the five sections. Surah 19 consists almost entirely of such stories. Can we understand *Sad* to stand for *qasas,* of which it is the most characteristic letter? In this Surah 7, we have also the spiritual history of mankind traced-the Beginning, the Middle, and the End, which, as explained in n. 25, might be represented symbolically by *Alif, Lam, Mim.* If so, this Surah, dealing with the Beginning, Middle, and End of man's spiritual story, and illustrating it by the stories of the Prophets, might well be represented symbolically by the letters, *Alif, Lam, Mim, Sad.* But no one can be dogmatic about these symbols. (R).

2. A Book revealed unto thee,- So let thy heart be oppressed(990) no more by any difficulty on that account,- that with it thou mightest warn (the erring) and teach the Believers).

990 *Heart* in the original, *breast.* I have used the word most appropriate to the English idiom. The meaning is that Al Mustafa is consoled for all the difficulties which he encountered in his mission, with the fact that he had clear guidance in the Book for his preaching.

3. Follow (O men!) the revelation given unto you from your Lord, and follow not, as friends or protectors, other than Him. Little it is ye remember of admonition.(991)

991 This is added in order that men might not be puffed up with such little knowledge as they possessed, for there are great heights to be scaled in the spiritual kingdom.

4. How many towns have We destroyed (for their sins)? Our punishment took them on a sudden by night or while they slept for their afternoon rest.

5. When (thus) Our punishment took them, no cry did they utter but this: "Indeed we did wrong."(992)

992 The spiritual story of man begins with a prelude. Think of the towns and nations ruined by their iniquity. Allah gave them many opportunities, and sent them warners and teachers. But they arrogantly went on in their evil ways, till some dreadful calamity came like a thief in the night and wiped out their traces. In a warm climate the disturbance in the heat of the midday rest is even more than the disturbance at night. It was when the catastrophe came that the people realised their sins, but it was too late.

6. Then shall we question those to whom Our message was sent and those by whom(993) We sent it.

993 In the final reckoning, the warners and teachers will give evidence of their preaching the truth, and the wicked will themselves have to acknowledge the truth. We picture it like a court scene, when the story is related, but the Judge knows all, even more than the parties can tell.

7. And verily, We shall recount their whole story with knowledge, for We were never absent (at any time or place).(994)

994 Allah (being All-Knowing) is never absent from any place or at any time, for time and place are relative conceptions for our limited natures, while He is the Absolute, independent of such relative conceptions. (R).

8. The balance that day will be true (to nicety): those whose scale (of good) will be heavy, will prosper:

9. Those whose scale will be light, will be their souls in perdition, for that they wrongfully treated Our signs.

10. It is We Who have placed you with authority on earth, and provided you therein with means for the fulfilment of your life:(995) small are the thanks that ye give!

995 That is, all the material things which are necessary to sustain, beautify, and refine life, as well as all those powers, faculties, and opportunities which are instrumental in bringing up life to a higher plane and preparing man for his high spiritual destiny.

11. It is We Who created you and gave you shape;(996) then We bade the angels bow down to Adam, and they bowed down; not so Iblis; He refused to be of those(997) who bow down.

996 *Shape* or form must be interpreted not only to refer to the physical form, which changes day by day, but also the various forms or shapes which our ideal and spiritual existence may take from time to time according to our inner experiences: *Cf.* 82:8. It was after Adam (as standing for all mankind) had been so taught that the angels were asked to bow down to him, for, by Allah's grace, his status had actually been raised higher. Note the transition from "you" (plural) in the first clause to "Adam" in the second clause: Adam and mankind are synonymous: the plural is reverted to in 7:14 , 16-18 *(Cf.* 40:64). (R).

997 Iblis not only refused to bow down: he refused to be of those who bowed down. In other words he arrogantly despised the angels who bowed down as well as man to whom they bowed down and he was in rebellion against Allah for not obeying His order. Arrogance, jealousy, and rebellion were his triple crime.

12. ((Allah)) said: "What prevented thee from bowing down when I commanded thee?" He said: "I am better than he: Thou didst create me from fire, and him from clay."(998)

998 Notice the subtle wiles of Iblis: his egotism in putting himself above men, and his falsehood in ignoring the fact that Allah had not merely made man's body from clay, but had given him spiritual form-in other words, had taught him the nature of things and raised him above the angels.

13. ((Allah)) said: "Get thee down from this:(999) it is not for thee to be arrogant here: get out, for thou art of the meanest (of creatures)."

999 *"This":* the situation as it was then-a rebellious creature impertinent to His Creator. At every step Iblis falls lower: arrogance, jealousy, disobedience, egotism and untruth.

14. He said: "Give me respite till the day they are raised up."

15. ((Allah)) said: "Be thou among those who have respite."(1000)

1000 Are there others under respite? Yes, Iblis has a large army of wicked seducers, and those men who their dupes. For though degradation takes effect at once, its appearance may be long-delayed.

16. He said: "Because thou hast thrown me out(1001) of the way, lo! I will lie in wait for them on thy straight way:

1001 Another instance of Iblis's subtlety and falsehood. He waits till he gets the respite. Then he breaks out into a lie and impertinent defiance. The lie is in suggesting that Allah had thrown him out of the Way, in other words misled him; whereas his own conduct was responsible for his degradation. The defiance is in his setting snares on the Straight Way to which Allah directs men. Iblis now falls a step lower than the five steps mentioned in n. 999. His sixth step is defiance.

17. "Then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left: Nor wilt thou find, in most of them, gratitude (for thy mercies)."(1002)

1002 The assault of evil is from all sides. It takes advantage of every weak point, and sometimes even our good and generous sympathies are used to decoy us into the snares of evil. Man has every reason to be grateful to Allah for all His loving care and yet man in his folly forgets his gratitude and does the very opposite of what he should do *(Cf.* 17:61-65).

18. ((Allah)) said: "Get out from this, disgraced and expelled. If any of them follow thee,- Hell will I fill with you all.

19. "O Adam! dwell thou(1003) and thy wife in the Garden, and enjoy(1004) (its good things) as ye wish: but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression."

1003 Now the story turns to man. He was placed in a spiritual Garden of innocence and bliss, but it was Allah's Plan to give him a limited faculty of choice. All that he was forbidden to do was to approach the Tree, but he succumbed to Satan's suggestions. (R).

1004 *Enjoy:* literally, "eat." *Cf.* the meaning of *ta'ama* in 6:14 , n. 847 and *akala* in 5:66, n. 776.

20. Then began Satan(1005) to whisper suggestions to them, in order to reveal to them their shame(1006) that was hidden from them (before): he said: "Your Lord only forbade you this tree, lest ye should become angels or such beings as live forever."

1005 The transition from the name "Iblis" to the name "Satan" is similar to that in 2:36 , where it is explained in n. 52.

1006 Our first parents as created by Allah (and this applies to all of us) were innocent in matters material as well as spiritual. They knew no evil. But the faculty of choice, which was given to them and which raised them above the angels, also implied that they had the capacity of evil, which by the training of their own will, they were to reject. They were warned of the danger. When they fell, they realised the evil. They were (and we are) still given the chance, in this life on a lower plane, to make good and recover the lost status of innocence and bliss.

21. And he swore to them both, that he was their sincere adviser.

22. So by deceit he brought about their fall: when they tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the garden over their bodies. And their Lord called unto them: "Did I not forbid you that tree, and tell you that Satan was an avowed enemy unto you?"

23. They said: "Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: If thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost."

24. ((Allah)) said: "Get ye down. With enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood,- for a time."

25. He said: "Therein shall ye live, and therein shall ye die; but from it shall ye be taken out (at last)."(1007)

1007 *Cf.* this whole passage about Adam with the passage in 2:30 -39, and with other passages in subsequent Surahs. In places the words are precisely the same, and yet the whole argument is different. In each case it exactly fits the context. In S. 2, the argument was about the origin of man. Here the argument is a prelude to his history on earth, and so it continues logically in the next section to address the Children of Adam, and goes on afterwards with the story of the various prophets that came to guide mankind. Truth is one, but its apt presentment in human words shows a different facet in different contexts.

26. O ye Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment(1008) upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness,- that is the best. Such are among the Signs of Allah, that they may receive admonition!

1008 There is a double philosophy of clothes here, to correspond with the double signification of verse 20 above, as explained in n. 1006. Spiritually, Allah created man "bare and alone" (6:94): the soul in its naked purity and beauty knew no shame because it knew no guilt: after it was touched by guilt and soiled by evil, its thoughts and deeds became its clothing and adornments, good or bad, honest or meretricious, according to the inner motives which gave them colour. So in the case of the body: it is pure and beautiful, as long as it is not defiled by misuse; its clothing and ornaments may be good or meretricious, according to the motives in the mind and character; if good, they are the symbols of purity and beauty; but the best clothing and ornament we could have comes from righteousness, which covers the nakedness of sin, and adorns us with virtues. (R).

27. O ye Children of Adam! Let not Satan seduce you, in the same manner as(1009) He got your parents out of the Garden, stripping them of their raiment, to expose their shame: for he and his tribe watch you from a position where ye cannot see them: We made the evil ones friends (only) to those without faith.

1009 That is, by fraud and deceit-by putting you off your guard and telling lies. Adam's story here becomes an introduction to the later spiritual history of mankind: 7:20 -22. In the Garden, Satan's deceit stripped off their raiment of honour and innocence. In this life, on a lower plane, he seeks to strip us of the raiment of righteousness. And he can take up positions on a vantage ground of worldly power or influence or riches, in which he and his confederates are not seen in their true colours. They may assume a fair-seeming disguise of disinterested friendship or high motives of patriotism or public spirit, or loyalty to ancestors, when beneath it there is nothing but spite and selfishness.

28. When they do aught that is shameful, they say: "We found our fathers doing so"; and "(Allah) commanded us thus": Say: "Nay, Allah never commands what is shameful: do ye say of Allah what ye know not?"

29. Say: "My Lord hath commanded justice; and that ye set your whole selves (to Him)(1010) at every time and place of prayer, and call upon Him, making your devotion sincere as in His sight: such as He created you(1011) in the beginning, so shall ye return."

1010 For *wajh,* see 2:112 and n. 114. Our devotion should be sincere, not as in other men's sight, but by presenting our whole selves, heart and soul, to Allah. Even so, it may not be enough; for the sight of our heart and soul may be faulty. We should call upon Allah to give us the light, by which our sincerity may commend itself to Him as true sincerity "as in His sight".

1011 *Cf.* 6:94. Our sincerity should be real sincerity, as in His sight, for when we return to Him, we shall be stripped of all pretence, even such self-deception as may satisfy us in this life (see also 29:65 and 31:32).

30. Some He hath guided: Others have (by their choice) deserved the loss of their way;(1012) in that they took the evil ones, in preference to Allah, for their friends and protectors, and think that they receive guidance.

1012 Guidance is for all. But in some it takes effect; in others the doors are closed against it, because they have taken Evil for their friend. If they have lost their way, they have richly deserved it; for they deliberately took their choice, even though, in their self-righteousness, they may think that their sin is their virtue, and that their Evil is their Good *(Cf.* 36:7 and 17:16).

31. O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel(1013) at every time and place of prayer: eat

and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters.

1013 *Beautiful apparel: zinah:* adornments or apparel for beautiful living: construed to mean not only clothes that add grace to the wearer, but toilet and cleanliness, attention to hair, and other small personal details which no self-respecting man or woman ought to neglect when going solemnly even before a great human dignitary, if only out of respect for the dignity of the occasion. How much more important it is to attend to these details when we solemnly apply our minds to the Presence of Allah. But the caution against excess applies: men must not go to prayer in silks or ornaments appropriate to women. Similarly sober food, good and wholesome, is not to be divorced from offices of religion; only the caution against excess applies strictly. A dirty, unkept, slovenly *Faqir* could not claim sanctity in Islam. (R).

32. **Say: Who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah,(1014) which He hath produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely(1015) for them on the Day of Judgment. Thus do We explain the signs in detail for those who understand.**

1014 Asceticism often means the negation of art and beauty, it has no necessary sanctity attached to it.

1015 The beautiful and good things of life are really meant for, and should be the privilege of those with faith in Allah. If they do not always have them in this life, and if there is sometimes the semblance of others having them who do not deserve them, let us at least consider the matter in another light. Our Faith in Allah's wisdom is unshaken and we know that these are but fleeting and mixed types of the things in the spiritual world. Their pure counterparts in the spiritual world will be only for those who proved, in all the trials of this world, that they had faith.

33. **Say: the things that my Lord hath indeed forbidden are:(1016) shameful deeds, whether open or secret; sins and trespasses against truth or reason; assigning of partners to Allah, for which He hath given no authority; and saying things about Allah of which ye have no knowledge.**

1016 The forbidden things are described in four categories: (1) what is shameful or unbecoming; the sort of things which have also legal and social sanctions, not of a local but of a universal kind; they may be called offences against society; (2) sins against self and trespasses or excesses of every sort; these are against truth and reason; here would come in indiscipline, failure in doing intangible duties not clearly defined by law; selfishness or self-aggrandisement, which may be condoned by custom and not punished by law, etc.; (3) erecting fetishes or false gods; this is treason against the true God; and (4) corrupting religion by debasing superstitions, etc.

34. **To every people is a term(1017) appointed: when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay, nor (an hour) can they advance (it in anticipation).**

1017 People: *ummah.* I do not know whether "generation" would not be more appropriate here. If so, it would refer to the Time-Spirit, for it affects a whole number of people living contemporaneously, and while we deal grammatically with a group, we really have in mind the individuals composing the group. Anyway, the lesson is what is suggested in the following verses. There is only a limited time for an individual or for a group of people *(Cf.* 10:49). If they do not make good during that time of probation, the chance is lost, and it cannot come again. We cannot retard or advance the march of time by a single hour or minute. ("Hour" in the text expresses an indefinite but short period of time.)

35. **O ye Children of Adam! whenever there come to you messengers from amongst you, rehearsing My signs unto you,- those who are righteous and mend (their lives),- on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.**

36. **But those who reject Our signs and treat them with arrogance,- they are companions of the Fire, to dwell therein (forever).(1017-A)**

1017-A *(Cf.* 2:167, 39:72, and 40:76)

37. **Who is more unjust than one who invents a lie against Allah or rejects His Signs? For such, their portion(1018) appointed must reach them from the Book (of decrees): until, when our messengers (of death) arrive and take their souls, they say: "Where are the things that ye used to invoke besides Allah." They will reply, "They have left us in the lurch," And they will bear witness against themselves, that they had rejected Allah.**

1018 It must not be supposed that the rebels against Allah would at once be cut off in this life for their sins. They will get the portion allotted to them, including the good things of life and the chance of repentance and reformation, during their probationary period on this earth. During that period they will have a full run. After that period expires, they will be called to account. They will themselves see that the false things in which they put their trust, were false, and they will confess their sin, but it will be too late.

38. **He will say: "Enter ye in the company of the peoples who passed away before you - men and jinns, - into the Fire." Every time a new people enters, it curses its sister-people (that went before), until they follow each other, all into the Fire. Saith the last about the first: "Our Lord! it is these that misled us: so give them a double penalty in the Fire." He will say: "Doubled(1019) for all" : but this ye do not understand.**

1019 The earlier generations committed a double crime: (1) their own sins, (2) the bad example they set for those that followed. We are responsible not only for our own misdeeds, but for those which our example and our teaching to our juniors may induce them to commit. But it does not lie in the mouth of the juniors to ask for a double punishment for seniors: the motive is not justice, but pure spite, which is itself a sin. Further, the later generations have to answer for two things: (1) their own sins, and (2) their failure to learn from the past, from the experiences of those who preceded them. They should have an advantage in this respect, being "in the foremost files of Time," but they did not learn. Thus there was nothing to choose between the earlier and later generations in the matter of guilt. But how few people understand this! *(Cf.* 11:20 , 25:69, 33:68, and 38:61).

In 6:160, we were told that good was rewarded tenfold, but evil was punished according to its guilt, in perfect justice. This verse is in no way inconsistent with it. Two crimes must have a double penalty. (R).

39. **Then the first will say to the last: "See then! No advantage have ye over us; so taste ye of the penalty for all that ye did !"(1020)**

1020 Wrongdoers have really no sense of honour towards each other. "Honour among thieves" is an exceptional, not an ordinary, experience. In real life, guilt and crime are apt to indulge in mean spite and bitter recriminations against accomplices.

40. **To those who reject Our signs and treat them with arrogance, no opening will there be of the gates of heaven, nor will they enter the garden, until the camel can pass through the eye of the needle: Such is Our reward for those in sin.**

41. **For them there is Hell, as a couch (below) and folds and folds of covering above: such is Our requital of those who do wrong.**

42. **But those who believe and work righteousness,- no burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear,- they will be Companions of the Garden, therein to dwell (for ever).**

43. **And We shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury;-(1021) beneath them will be rivers flowing;- and they shall say: "Praise be to Allah, who hath guided us to this (felicity): never could we have found guidance, had it not been for the guidance of Allah. indeed it was the truth, that the messengers of**

our Lord brought unto us." And they shall hear the cry: "Behold! the garden before you! Ye have been made(1022) its inheritors, for your deeds (of righteousness)."

1021 A man who may have suffered or been disappointed may have a lurking sense of injury at the back of his mind, which may spoil his enjoyment on account of past memory intruding in the midst of felicity. In such cases memory itself is pain. Even sorrow is intensified by memory: as Tennyson says, "A sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things." But that is in this our imperfect life. In the perfect felicity of the righteous, all such feelings will be blotted out. No "heartaches" then and no memories of them! The clouds of the past will have dissolved in glorious light, and no past happiness will be comparable with the perfect happiness which will have then been attained. Nor will any sense of envy or shortcoming be possible in that perfect bliss.

1022 Jesus said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth": Matt. 5:5. Here we are told: blessed are the righteous, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. The stress here is on actual practical deeds of righteousness: whether they find their rewards on earth or not is immaterial: their attention is directed to an infinitely greater reward, the kingdom of Heaven . In the Sermon on the Mount this is promised to the "poor in spirit": Matt. 5:3.

44. The Companions of the Garden will call out to the Companions of the Fire: "We have indeed found the promises of our Lord to us true: Have you also found Your Lord´s promises true?" They shall say, "Yes"; but(1023) a crier shall proclaim between them: "The curse of Allah is on the wrong-doers;-

1023 The Companions of the Fire can only answer a single word, 'Yes," such is their state of misery. Even so, their voice is drowned in the voice of the Crier, who explains their state: they are in a state of curse, that is, deprivation of the Grace and Mercy of Allah. Such deprivation is the highest misery that souls can suffer.

45. "Those who would hinder (men) from the path of Allah and would seek in it something crooked:(1024) they were those who denied the Hereafter."

1024 The unrighteous reflect their own crooked mind when the path of Allah is before them. Instead of going straight, they try to find something in it that suits their own crooked ideas. Frankly they have no faith in the final Goal, the Hereafter *(Cf.* 11:19).

46. Between them shall be a veil, and on the heights(1025) will be men who would know every one by his marks: they will call out to the Companions of the Garden, "peace on you": they will not have entered, but they will have an assurance (thereof).

1025 This is a difficult passage, and Commentators have interpreted it in different ways. Three distinct schools of thought may be discerned in the interpretation. (1) One school thinks that the men on the Heights are Angels, or such men of exalted spiritual dignity *(e.g.,* the great Prophets), as will be able to know the souls at sight as regards their spiritual worth: the Heights will be their exalted stations, from which they will welcome the righteous with a salutation of peace, even before the righteous have entered heaven; the salutation of peace being itself an assurance of salvation to those whom they salute. (2) Another school of thought thinks that the men on the Heights are such souls as are not decidedly on the side of merit or decidedly on the side of sin, but evenly balanced on a partition between heaven and hell. Their case is yet to be decided, but their salutation to the righteous is a wistful salutation, because they hope for Allah's Mercy. (3) The third line of interpretation, with which I agree, is close to the first, with this exception, that the partition and the Heights are figurative. The higher souls will rejoice at the approaching salvation of the righteous.

47. When their eyes(1026) shall be turned towards the Companions of the Fire, they will say: "Our Lord! send us not to the company of the wrong-doers."

1026 *Their eyes:* according to interpretation (2) of the last note, *"their 1 '* would refer to the people whose fete has not yet been decided, and the speech would be theirs; according to interpretations (1) and (3) in that note, "their" would refer to the Companions of the Garden, who would realise the terrible nature of hell, and express their horror of it. I prefer the latter. Then the mention of the "men on the Heights" and their speech in verse 48 conies in naturally as a different kind of speech from a different kind of men.

48. The men on the heights will call to certain men whom they will know from their marks, saying:(1027) "Of what profit to you were your hoards and your arrogant ways?

1027 This speech is in three parts: (1) the last lines of this verse are addressed to the Companions of the Fire, reminding them (as a bench of judges might speak to a prisoner) of the futility of their wealth and riches and arrogance in their earthly life; (2) the second part, in the first half of verse 49, recalls to their minds how false was their contempt of the good but lowly men who are now to be the inheritors of Heaven; and (3) the latter part of verse 49, "enter ye the Garden" is addressed to the Blessed, to give them a welcome to their state of felicity.

49. "Behold! are these not the men whom you swore that Allah with His Mercy would never bless? Enter ye the Garden: no fear shall be on you, nor shall ye grieve."

50. The Companions of the Fire will call to the Companions of the Garden: "Pour down to us water or anything that Allah doth provide for your sustenance." They will say: "Both these things hath Allah forbidden to those who rejected Him."(1028)

1028 The Companions of the Fire will thirst for water and not get it, and for sustenance which will not be theirs, while the Companions of the Garden will have the crystal waters of the springs and rivers and they will enjoy the bliss of Allah's Countenance, which will be their supreme nourishment and the fruit of their life of probation and seeking. These things will not be transferable. *Cf.* also 37:41-47, 37:4147, 47:15, and 62-67. (R).

51. "Such as took their religion to be mere amusement and play, and were deceived by the life of the world." That day shall We forget them(1029) as they forgot the meeting of this day of theirs, and as they were wont to reject Our signs.

1029 "Forgetfulness" may be involuntary, from a defect of memory, or figuratively, a deliberate turning away from, or ignoring of, something we do not want, as when we say in an argument, "you conveniently forget that so-and-so is so-and-so." Here the latter kind is meant. If men deliberately ignored the Hereafter in spite of warnings, can they expect to be received by Allah, Whom they themselves rejected? (*Cf.* 9:67 and 45:34).

52. For We had certainly sent unto them a Book, based on knowledge, which We explained in detail,- a guide and a mercy to all who believe.

53. Do they just wait for the final fulfilment(1030) of the event? On the day the event is finally fulfilled, those who disregarded it before will say: "The messengers of our Lord did indeed bring true (tidings). Have we no intercessors now to intercede on our behalf? Or could we be sent back? then should we behave differently from our behaviour in the past." In fact they will have lost their souls, and the things they invented will leave them in the lurch.

1030 If those without faith want to wait and see what happens in the Hereafter, they will indeed learn the truth, but it will be too late for them to profit by it then. All the false ideals and false gods which they put their trust upon will leave them in the lurch. If they thought that the goodness or greatness of others would help them, they will be undeceived on the day when their personal responsibility will be enforced. There will be no salvation except on their own record. How they will then wish that they had another chance! But their chance will be gone (*Cf.* 10:39 and 32:14).

54. Your Guardian-Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth(1031) in six days, and is firmly established on the throne(1032) (of authority): He draweth the night as a veil o´er the day, each seeking the other in rapid succession: He created the sun, the moon, and the stars, (all) governed by laws under His command. Is it not His to create and to govern?

Blessed be Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds!

1031 A sublime verse, comparable to the Throne Verse, 2:255. The Creation in *six Days* is of course metaphorical. In 45:14, the "Days of Allah" refer not so much to time as to the growth in us of a spiritual sense, a sense of sin and a sense of Allah's Mercy. In 22:47 , we are told that a Day in the sight of Allah is *like* a thousand years of our reckoning, and in 70:4, the comparison is with 50,000 of our years. In the history of our material earth, we may reckon six great epochs of evolution. The significance of the figure *six* will be discussed in connection with 41:9-12, where the matter is referred to in more detail.

1032 Here, we are told of the creation of the Heavens and the Earth in six days. But lest we should be obsessed with the Jewish idea that Allah *rested* on the seventh day, we are told that the Creation was but a prelude to Allah's work: for His authority is exercised constantly by the laws which He establishes and enforces in all parts of His Creation. The beautiful imagery of night and day seeking out each other in rapid succession is still further enforced in the Arabic by the double accusative of the verb *y yughshi,* showing the *mutual* interactions of the day and the night, each covering the other in turn. The Heavenly bodies show an order which is evidence of His *constant* care and government. Not only that, but it is only He Who creates, maintains, and governs, and no one else. (R).

55. Call on your Lord with humility and in private:(1033) for Allah loveth not those who trespass beyond bounds.

1033 In prayer, we must avoid any arrogance or show or loudness, or vanity of requests or words. If excess is condemned in all things, it is specially worthy of condemnation when we go humbly before our Lord-we poor creatures before the Omnipotent, Who knoweth all.

56. Do no mischief on the earth, after it hath been(1034) set in order, but call on Him with fear(1035) and longing (in your hearts): for the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good.

1034 The man who prays with humility and earnestness finds the ground prepared by Allah for his spiritual advancement. It is all set in order, and cleared of weeds. He does not, like the wicked, upset that order, to introduce evil or mischief into it.

1035 *(Cf.* 30:46). *Fear and longing:* the fear of Allah is really a fear lest we should diverge from His Will, or do anything which would not be pleasing to Him: unlike ordinary fear, it therefore brings us nearer to Allah, and in fact nourishes our longing and desire for Him.

57. It is He Who sendeth the winds like heralds of glad tidings, going before(1036) His mercy: when they have carried the heavy-laden clouds, We drive them to a land that is dead, make rain to descend thereon, and produce every kind of harvest therewith: thus shall We raise up the dead: perchance ye may remember.

1036 The Parable is complete in its triple significance. (1) In the physical world the winds go like heralds of glad tidings; they are the advance guard, behind which is coming a great army of winds driving heavily laden clouds before it; the wise Providence of Allah is their General, who directs them towards a parched land, on which the clouds deliver their gladdening showers of mercy, which convert the dead land into a living, fertile, and beautiful land bearing a rich harvest *(Cf.* 25:48). (2) In the spiritual world, the winds are the great motive forces in the mind of man, or in the world around him, that bring the clouds or instruments of Allah's Mercy, which descend and fertilise souls hitherto spiritually dead. (3) If we can see or experience such things in our life here below, can we doubt the resurrection?

58. From the land that is clean and good, by the will of its Cherisher, springs up produce, (rich) after its kind:(1037) but from the land that is bad, springs up nothing but that which is niggardly: thus do we explain the signs by various (symbols) to those who are grateful.(1038)

1037 The triple parable explained in the last note is here continued. {1) In the physical world, the fertilising showers of rain yield a rich harvest on good soil, but bad soil yields little or nothing, (2) In the, spiritual world, also, Allah's Mercy evokes no response in some souls which have chosen evil. (3) In the final reckoning, though all will be raised, not all will achieve the fulfilment of their lives.

1038 *Those who are grateful are* those who joyfully receive Allah's Message, and respond to it by deeds of holiness and righteousness.

59. We sent Noah to his people.(1039) He said: "O my people! worship Allah. ye have no other god but Him. I fear for you the punishment of a dreadful day!

1039 The story of Noah in greater detail will be found in 6:25 -49. Here the scheme is to tell briefly the stories of some of the Prophets between Noah and Moses, and lead up thus to a lesson for the contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad himself. When Noah attacked the wickedness of his generation, he was laughed at for a madman, for he mentioned the Great Day to come in the Hereafter, Allah's retribution came soon afterwards- the great Flood, in which his unbelieving people were drowned, but he and those who believed in him and came into the Ark were saved.

60. The leaders of his people said: "Ah! we see thee evidently wandering (in mind)."

61. He said: "O my people! No wandering is there in my (mind): on the contrary I am a messenger from the Lord and Cherisher of the worlds!

62. "I but fulfil towards you the duties of my Lord´s mission: Sincere is my advice to you, and I know from Allah something that ye know not.

63. "Do ye wonder that there hath come to you a message from your Lord, through a man of your own people, to warn you,- so that ye may fear Allah and haply receive His Mercy?"

64. But they rejected him, and We delivered him, and those with him, in the Ark: but We overwhelmed in the flood those who rejected Our signs. They were indeed a blind people!

65. To the ´Ad people,(1040) (We sent) Hud, one of their (own) brethren: He said: O my people! worship Allah. ye have no other god but Him will ye not fear ((Allah))?"

1040 The 'Ad people, with their prophet Hud, are mentioned in many places. See especially 26:123-140, and 46:21-26. Their story belongs to Arabian tradition. Their eponymous ancestor 'Ad was fourth in generation from Noah, having been a son of 'Aus, the son of Aram , the son of Sam, the son of Noah. They occupied a large tract of country in Southern Arabia, extending from 'Uman at the mouth of the Persian Gulf to Hadramawt and Yemen at the southern end of the Red Sea . The people were tall in stature and were great builders. Probably the long, winding tracts of sands *(ahqaf)* in their dominions (46:21) were irrigated with canals. They forsook the true God, and oppressed their people. A three-year famine visited them, but yet they took no warning. At length a terrible blast of wind destroyed them and their land, but a remnant, known as the second 'Ad or the Thamud (see below) were saved, and afterwards suffered a similar fate for their sins.

The tomb of the Prophet Hud *(qohr Nabi Hud)* is still traditionally shown in Hadramut, latitude 15°N and longitude 49V£ °E, about 90 miles north of Mukalla. There are ruins and inscriptions in the neighbourhood. See "Hadramut: Some of its Mysteries Unveiled," by D. van der Meulen and H. von Wissmann, Leyden , 1932. (R).

66. The leaders of the Unbelievers among his people said: "Ah! we see thou art an imbecile!" and "We think thou art a liar!"

67. He said: "O my people! I am no imbecile, but (I am) a messenger from the Lord and Cherisher of the worlds!

68. "I but fulfil towards you the duties of my Lord´s mission: I am to you a sincere and trustworthy adviser.

69. "Do ye wonder that there hath come to you a message from your Lord through a man of your own people, to warn you? call in remembrance that He made you inheritors after the people of Noah, and gave you a stature tall among the nations. Call in

remembrance the benefits (ye have received) from Allah. that so ye may prosper."

70. They said: "Comest thou to us, that we may worship Allah alone, and give up the cult of our fathers? bring us what thou threatenest us with, if so be that thou tellest the truth!"

71. He said: "Punishment and wrath have already(1041) come upon you from your Lord: dispute ye with me over names which ye(1042) have devised - ye and your fathers,- without authority from Allah. then wait: I am amongst you, also waiting."

1041 The past tense may be understood in three ways. (1) A terrible famine had already afflicted the 'Ad as a warning before they were overwhelmed in the final blast of hot wind (see the last note). (2) The terrible insolence and sin into which they had fallen was itself a punishment. (3) The prophetic past is used, as much as to say: "Behold! I see a dreadful calamity: it is already on you!"

1042 Why dispute over names and imaginary gods, the inventions of your minds? Come to realities. If you ask for the punishment and are waiting in insolent defiance, what can I do but also wait?- in fear and trembling for you, for I know that Allah's punishment is sure! *(Cf.* 53:23).

72. We saved him and those who adhered to him. By Our mercy, and We cut off the roots of those who rejected Our signs and did not believe.

73. To the Thamud people(1043) (We sent) Salih, one of their own brethren: He said: "O my people! worship Allah. ye have no other god but Him. Now hath come unto you a clear (Sign) from your Lord! This she-camel of Allah is a Sign unto you: So leave her to graze in Allah.s earth, and let her come to no harm, or ye shall be seized with a grievous punishment.(1044)

1043 The Thamud people were the successors to the culture and civilisation of the 'Ad people, for whom see n. 1040 and 7:65 above. They were cousins to the 'Ad, apparently a younger branch of the same race. Their story also belongs to Arabian tradition, according to which their eponymous ancestor Thamud was a son of 'Abir {a brother of Aram), the son of Sam, the son of Noah. Their seat was in the northwest corner of Arabia (Arabia Petraea), between Madman and Syria . It included both rocky country *(hijr,* 15:80), and the spacious fertile valley (Wadi) and plains country of Qura, which begins just north of the City of Madinah and was traversed by the Hijaz Railway. When the Prophet in the 9th year of the Hijrah led his expedition to Tabuk (about 400 miles north of Madinah) against the Roman forces, on a reported Roman invasion from Syria , he and his men came across the archaeological remains of Thamud. The recently excavated rock city of Petra , near Ma'an, may go back to Thamud, though its architecture has many features connecting it with Egyptian and Graeco-Roman culture overlaying what is called by European writers Nabataean culture. Who were the Nabataeans? They were an old Arab tribe which played a considerable part in history after they came into conflict with Antigonus 1 in 312 B.C. Their capital was Petra , but they extended their territory right up to the Euphrates . In 85 B.C. they were lords of Damascus under their king Haritha (Aretas of Roman history). For some time they were allies of the Roman Empire and held the Red Sea littoral. The Emperor Trajan reduced them and annexed their territory in A.C. 105. The Nabataeans succeeded Thamud of Arabian tradition. Thamud are mentioned by name in an inscription of the Assyrian King Sargon, dated 715 B.C., as a people of Eastern and Central Arabia *(Encyclopedia, of Islam).* See also Appendix VII to S. 26.

With the advance of material civilisation, Thamud people became godless and arrogant, and were destroyed by an earthquake. Their prophet and warner was Salih, and the crisis in their history is connected with the story of a wonderful she-camel: see next note.

1044 The story of this wonderful she-camel, that was a sign Lo the Thamud, is variously told in tradition. We need not follow the various versions in the traditional story. What we are told in the Qur'an is: that (1) she was a Sign or Symbol, which the Prophet Salih, used for a warning to the haughty oppressors of the poor; (2) there was scarcity of water, and the arrogant or privileged classes tried to prevent the access of the poor or their cattle to the springs, while Salih intervened on their behalf (26:155, 54:28); (3) like water, pasture was considered a free gift of nature, in this spacious earth of Allah (7:73), but the arrogant ones tried to monopolise the pasture also; (4) this particular she-camel was made a test case (54:27) to see if the arrogant ones would come to reason; (5) the arrogant ones, instead of yielding to the reasonable rights of the people, hamstrung the poor she-camel and slew her, probably secretly (91:14, 54:29); the cup of their iniquities was full, and the Thamud people were destroyed by a dreadful earthquake, which threw them prone on the ground and buried them with their houses and their fine buildings.

74. "And remember how He made you inheritors after the ´Ad people and gave you habitations in the land: ye build for yourselves palaces and castles in (open) plains, and carve out homes in the mountains; so bring to remembrance the benefits (ye have received) from Allah, and refrain from evil and mischief on the earth."

75. The leaders of the arrogant party among his people said to those who were reckoned powerless - those among them(1045) who believed: "know ye indeed that Salih is a messenger from his Lord?" They said: "We do indeed believe in the revelation(1046) which hath been sent through him."

1045 As usually happens in such cases, the Believers were the lowly and the humble, and the oppressors were the arrogant, who in selfishly keeping back nature's gifts (which are Allah's gifts) from the people, were deaf to the dictates of justice and kindness. Salih took the side of the unprivileged, and was therefore himself attacked.

1046 Notice the relation between the question and the answer. The godless chiefs wanted to discredit Salih, and put a personal question, as much as to say, "Is he not a liar?" The Believers took back the issue to the higher plane, as much as to say, "We know he is a man of Allah, but look at the justice for which he is making a stand: to resist it is to resist Allah". The answer of the godless was to reject Allah in words, and in action to commit a further act of cruelty and injustice in hamstringing and killing the she-camel, at the same time hurling defiance at Salih and his God.

76. The Arrogant party said: "For our part, we reject what ye believe in."

77. Then they ham-strung the she-camel, and insolently defied the order of their Lord, saying: "O Salih! bring about thy threats, if thou art a messenger (of Allah.!)"

78. So the earthquake took them(1047) unawares, and they lay prostrate in their homes in the morning!

1047 The retribution was not long delayed. A terrible earthquake came and buried the people and destroyed their boasted civilisation. The calamity must have been fairly extensive in area and intense in the terror it inspired, for it is described (54:31) as a "single mighty blast" *(sayhatan wahidatan),* the sort of terror-inspiring noise which accompanies all big earthquakes.

79. So Salih left them,(1048) saying: "O my people! I did indeed convey to you the message for which I was sent by my Lord: I gave you good counsel, but ye love not good counsellors!"

1048 Salih was saved by Allah's mercy as a just and righteous man. His speech here may be either a parting warning, or it may be a soliloquy lamenting the destruction of his people for their sin and folly.

80. We also (sent) Lut:(1049) He said to his people: "Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you?

1049 Lut is the Lot of the English Bible. His story is biblical, but freed from some shameful features which are a blot on the biblical narrative, *(e.g.,* see Gen. 19:30-36 and n. 1575 to 11:78). He was a nephew of Abraham, and was sent as a Prophet and warner to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah , cities utterly destroyed for their unspeakable sins. They cannot be exactly located, but it may be supposed that they were somewhere in the plain east of the Dead Sea . The story of their destruction is told in the 19th chapter of Genesis. Two angels in the shape of handsome young men came to Lot in the evening and became his guests by night. The inhabitants of Sodom in their lust for unnatural crime invaded Lot 's house but were repulsed. In the morning, the angels warned Lot to escape with his family. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his

wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt" (Gen. 19:24-26).

Note that Lut's people are the people to whom he is sent on a mission. He was not one of their own brethren, as was Salihor Shu'ayb. But he looked upon his people as his brethren (50:13), as a man of God always does.

81. "For ye practise your lusts on men in preference to women : ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds."

82. And his people gave no answer but this: they said, "Drive them out of your city: these are indeed men who want to be clean and pure!"(1050)

1050 An instance of the withering sarcasm that hardened sinners use against the righteous. They wound with words, and follow up the insult with deeds of injustice, thinking that they would bring the righteous into disgrace. But Allah looks after His own, and in the end, the wicked themselves are overthrown when the cup of their iniquity is full. (*Cf.* 29:29)

83. But we saved him and his family, except his wife: she was of those who legged behind.(1051)

1051 In the biblical narrative she looks back, a physical act (see n. 1049): here she is a type of those who lag behind, *i.e.* whose mental and moral attitude, in spite of their association with the righteous, is to hark back to the glitter of wickedness and sin *(Cf.* 37:135). The righteous should have one sole objective, the Way of Allah. They should not look behind, nor yet to the right or the left.

84. And we rained down on them a shower (of brimstone):(1052) Then see what was the end of those who indulged in sin and crime!

1052 The shower is expressly stated in Q. 11:82 to have been of stones. In 15:73-74, we are told that there was a terrible blast or noise *(sayhah)* in addition to the shower of stones. Taking these passages into consideration along with Gen, 19:24 . (seen. 1049 above), I think it is legitimate to translate: "a shower of brimstone."

85. To the Madyan people(1053) We sent Shu´ayb,(1054) one of their own brethren: he said: "O my people! worship Allah. Ye have no other god but Him. Now hath come unto you a clear (Sign) from your Lord! Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due; and do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order: that will be best for you, if ye have Faith.

1053 "Madyan" may be identified with "Midian." Midian and the Midianites are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, though the particular incident here mentioned belongs to Arab rather than to Jewish tradition. The Midianites were of Arab race, though, as neighbours of the Canaanites, they probably intermixed with them. They were a wandering tribe; it was Midianite merchants to whom Joseph was sold into slavery, and who took him to Egypt . Their principal territory in the time of Moses was in the northeast of the Sinai Peninsula , and east of the Amalekites. Under Moses the Israelites waged a war of extermination against them: they slew the kings of Midian, slaughtered all the males, burnt their cities and castles, and captured their cattle (Num. 31:7-11). This sounds like total extermination. Yet a few generations afterwards, they were so powerful that the Israelites for their sins were delivered into the captivity of the Midianites for seven years; both the Midianites and their camels were without number and the Israelites hid from them in "dens . . . caves, and strongholds" (Judges 7:1-6). Gideon destroyed them again, (Judges 7:1-25), say about two centuries after Moses. As the decisive battle was near the hill of Moreh, not far south of Mount Tabor, we may localise the Midianites on this occasion in the northern parts of the Jordan valley, at least 200 miles north of the Sinai Peninsula.

This and the previous destruction under Moses were local, and mention no *town* of Midian . In later times there was a town of Madyan on the east side of the Gulf of 'Aqaba. It is mentioned in Josephus, Eusebius, and Ptolemy: *(Encyclopaedia of Islam).* Then it disappears from geography. In Muslim times it was a revived town with quite a different kind of population, but it never flourished. The Midianites disappeared from history.

1054 Shu'ayb belongs to Arab rather than to Jewish tradition, to which he is unknown. His identification with Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, has no warrant, and I reject it. There is no similarity either in names or incidents, and there are chronological difficulties (see 1064 below). If, as the Commentators tell us, Shu'ayb was in the fourth generation from Abraham, being a great-grandson of Madyan (a son of Abraham), he would be only about a century from the time of Abraham, whereas the Hebrew Bible would give us a period of four to six centuries between Abraham and Moses. The mere fact that Jethro was a Midianite and that another name, Hobab, is mentioned for a father-in-law of Moses in Num. 10:29 , is slender ground for identification. As the Midianites were mainly a nomad tribe, we need not be surprised that their destruction in one or two settlements did not affect their life in wandering sections of the tribe in other geographical regions. Shu'ayb's mission was apparently in one of the settled towns of the Midianites, which was completely destroyed by an earthquake (7:91). If this happened in the century after Abraham, there is no difficulty in supposing that they were again a numerous tribe three or five centuries later, in the time of Moses (see last note). As they were a mixed wandering tribe, both their resilience and their eventual absorption can be easily understood. But the destruction of the settlement or settlements (if the Wood or Ayka was a separate settlement, see n. 2000 to 15:78) to which Shu'ayb was sent to preach was complete, and no traces of it now remain.

The name of the h ighest m ountain of Yemen , Nabi Shu'ayb (11,000 ft.) has probably no connection with the geographical territory of the nomad Midianites, unless we suppose that their wanderings extended so far south from the territories mentioned in the last note.

86. "And squat not on every road, breathing threats, hindering from the path of Allah those who believe in Him, and seeking in it something crooked; But remember how ye were little, and He gave you increase. And hold in your mind´s eye what was the end of those who did mischief.(1055)

1055 The Midianites were in the path of a commercial highway of Asia, *viz.,* that between two such opulent and highly organised nations as Egypt and the Mesopotamian group comprising Assyria and Babylonia . Their besetting sins are thus characterised here: (1) giving short measure or weight, whereas the strictest commercial probity is necessary for success, (2) a more general form of such fraud, depriving people of rightful dues, (3) producing mischief and disorder, whereas peace and order had been established (again in a literal as well as a metaphorical sense); (4) not content with upsetting settled life, taking to highway robbery, literally as well as (5) metaphorically, in two ways, *viz..,* cutting off people from access to the worship of Allah, and abusing religion and piety for crooked purposes, *i.e.,* exploiting religion itself for their crooked ends, as when a man builds houses of prayer out of unlawful gains or ostentatiously gives charity out of money which he has obtained by force or fraud, etc. After setting out this catalogue of besetting sin Shu'ayb makes two appeals to the past: (1) You began as an insignificant tribe, and by Allah's favour you increased and multiplied in numbers and resources; do you not then owe a duty to Allah to fulfill His Law? (2) What was the result in the case of those who fell into sin? Will you not take warning by their example?

So Shu'ayb began his argument with faith in Allah as the source of all virtue, and ended it with destruction as the result of all sin. In the next verse he pleads with them to end their controversies and come to Allah.

87. "And if there is a party among you who believes in the message with which I have been sent, and a party which does not believe,(1056) hold yourselves in patience until Allah doth decide between us: for He is the best to decide.(1057)

1056 Madyan is torn by internal conflict. Shu'ayb comes as a peacemaker, not in virtue of his own wisdom, but by an appeal to the truth, righteousness and justice of Allah. As we see later, the real motives of his opponents were selfishness, arrogance, violence, lawlessness, and injustice. But he appeals to their better nature, and is prepared to argue on the basis that the party which wants to suppress those who believe in Allah's Message and in righteousness, has some sincere mental difficulty in accepting Shu'ayb's mission. "If," he says to them, "that is the case, do you think it justifies your intolerance, your violence, or your persecution? On the contrary, events will prove by themselves who is right and who is wrong." To the small band who believe in his mission and follow his teaching, he would preach patience and perseverance. His argument to them would be: 'You have faith; surely your faith is strong enough to sustain you in the hope that Allah's truth will triumph in the end; there is no cause for despair or dejection."

How exactly these past experiences fit the times of our Holy Guide Muhammad! And it is for that analogy and that lesson that the stories of Noah, Hud, Salih, Lut, and Shu'ayb are related to us-all different, and yet all pointing to the great lessons in Muhammad's life.

1057 See the argument in the last note. Allah's decision may come partly in this very life, eidier for the same generation or for succeeding generations, by the logic of external events. But in any case it is bound to come spiritually on a higher plane eventually, when the righteous will be comforted and the sinners will be convinced of sin from their own inner conviction.

88. The leaders, the arrogant party among his people, said:(1058) "O Shu´aib! we shall certainly drive thee out of our city - (thee) and those who believe with thee; or else ye (thou and they) shall have to return to our ways and religion." He said: "What! even though we do detest (them)?

1058 The gentle, all-persuasive arguments of Shu'ayb fell on hard hearts. Their only reply was: "Turn him out! - him and his people." When courtesy and a plea for toleration are pitted against bigotry, what room is there for logic? But bigotry and unrighteousness have their own crooked ways of pretending to be tolerant. "0 yes!" they said, "We are very tolerant and long-suffering! But we are for our country and religion. Come back to the ways of our fathers, and we shall graciously forgive you!" "Ways of their fathers!" - they meant injustice and oppression, highhandedness to the poor and the weak, fraud under cover of religion, and so on! Perhaps the righteous were the poor and the weak. Were they likely to love such ways? Perhaps there was implied a bribe as well as a threat. "If you come back and wink at our iniquities, you shall have scraps of prosperity thrown at you. If not, out you go in disgrace!"

89. "We should indeed invent(1059) a lie against Allah, if we returned to your ways after Allah hath rescued us therefrom; nor could we by any manner of means return thereto unless it be as in the will and plan of Allah,(1060) Our Lord. Our Lord can reach out to the utmost recesses of things by His knowledge. In the Allah is our trust. our Lord! Decide thou(1061) between us and our people in truth, for Thou art the best to decide."

1059 The answer of the righteous is threefold. (1) "Coming back is all very well. But do you mean that we should practise the vices we detest?" (2) 'You want us to lie against our consciences and our Lord, after we have seen the evil of your ways." (3) "Neither bribes nor threats, nor specious appeals to patriotism or ancestral religion can move us: the matter rests with Allah, Whose will and pleasure we obey, and on Whom alone we rely. His knowledge will search out all your specious pretences."

1060 This of course, does not mean that anyone can ever return to evil ways with Allah's consent. Shu'ayb has already emphatically repudiated the idea of returning "to your ways after Allah hath rescued us therefrom." But even if their ways had been good, the human will, he goes on to say, has no data to rely upon, and he and his followers would only be guided by Allah's Will and Plan.

1061 Having answered the insincere quibblers among the godless, the righteous turn to Allah in earnest prayer. The endless controversies in this world about abstract or speculative things never end even where both sides are sincere in their beliefs. The decision must be taken to Allah, Who sits on the throne of Truth, and Whose decisions will, therefore, be free from the errors and imperfections of all human judgement. The sincere have nothing to fear in the appeal to Him, as their motives are pure.

90. The leaders, the unbelievers among his people, said: "If ye follow Shu´aib, be sure then ye are ruined!"(1062)

1062 The answer of the Unbelievers is characteristic. As all their bribes and subtleties have failed, they resort to threats, which are worse than the argument of the stick. "All right," they say, "there is nothing but ruin before you!" That means that the Believers will be persecuted, held up to obloquy, ostracised, and prevented from access to all means of honorable livelihood; their families and dependants will be insulted, reviled, and tortured, if they could but be got into the enemy's power; their homes destroyed, and their names held up to ridicule and contempt even when they are gone. But, as verse 92 says, their wicked designs recoiled on themselves: it was the wicked who were ruined and blotted out.

91. But the earthquake took them unawares, and they lay prostrate in their homes before the morning!(1063)

1063 The fate of the Madyan people is described in the same terms as that of the *Thamud* in verse 78 above. An earthquake seized them by night, and they were buried in their own homes, no longer to vex Allah's earth. But a supplementary detail is mentioned in Q. 26:189, "the punishment of a day of overshadowing gloom," which may be understood to mean a shower of ashes and cinders accompanying a volcanic eruption. Thus a day of terror drove them into their homes, and the earthquake finished them. The lament of Shu'ayb in verse 93 is almost the same as that of Salih in verse 79, with two differences: (1) Shu'ayb's messages attacked the many sins of his people (see n. 1055) and are, therefore, expressed in the plural, while Salih's fight was chiefly against selfish arrogance, and his message is expressed in the singular; (2) the Thamud were the more cultured people of the two, and perished in their own pride; as Salih said, "ye love not good counsellors"; the Midianites were a rougher people, and their minds were less receptive of argument or faith; as Shu'ayb said, they were a people who "refused to believe."

92. The men who reject Shu´aib became as if they had never been in the homes where they had flourished: the men who rejected Shu´aib - it was they who were ruined!

93. So Shu´aib left them, saying: "O my people! I did indeed convey to you the messages for which I was sent by my Lord: I gave you good counsel, but how shall I lament over a people who refuse to believe!"(1064)

1064 Can we get any idea of the chronological place of the destruction of the Midianites? In n. 1053 (7:85) we have discussed the geographical aspects. The following considerations will help us in getting some idea of their period: (1) The stories of Noah, Hud, Salih, Lut, and Shu'ayb seem to be in chronological order. Therefore Shu'ayb came after Abraham, whose nephew Lut was; (2) If Shu'ayb was in the fourth generation from Abraham, (see 11:89, n. 1590), it would be impossible for him to have been a contemporary of Moses, who came many centuries later - this difficulty is recognised by Ibn Kathir and other classical commentators;

(3) The identification of Shu'ayb with Jethro the father-in-law of Moses is without warrant; see n. 1054 (7:85);

(4) Shu'ayb must have been before Moses; see 7:103; (5) The Midianites who were destroyed by Moses and by Gideon after him (n. 1053) were local remnants, as we may speak of the Jews at the present day; but their existence as a nation in their original homelands seems to have ended before Moses: "they became as if they had never been in the homes where they had flourished" (7:92); (6) Josephus, Eusebhis, and Ptolemy mention a town of Madyan, but it was not of any importance (n. 1053); (7) After the first centuries of the Christian era, Madyan as a town appears as an unimportant place resting on its past.

94. Whenever We sent a prophet to a town, We took up its people in suffering and adversity, in order that they might learn humility.(1065)

1065 Man was originally created pure. The need of a Prophet arises when there is some corruption and iniquity, which he is sent to combat. His coming means much trial and suffering, especially to those who join him in his protest against wrong. Even so peaceful a Prophet as Jesus said: "I came not to send peace butasword" (Matt. 10:34). But it is all in Allah's Plan, for we must learn humility if we would be worthy of Him.

95. Then We changed their suffering into prosperity, until they grew(1066) and multiplied, and began to say: "Our fathers (too) were touched by suffering and affluence" ... Behold! We called them to account of a sudden, while they realised not (their peril).

1066 Allah gives enough rope to the sinful. They grow and multiply, and become scornful. Neither suffering nor affluence teaches them the lessons which they are meant to learn, *viz.,* patience and humility, gratitude and kindness to others. They take adversity and prosperity alike as a matter of chance. "O yes!" they say, "Such things have happened in all ages! Our fathers had such experience before us, and our sons will have them after us. Thus goes on the world for all time!" But does it? What about the Plan of the Architect? They are found napping when Nemesis overtakes them in the midst of their impious tomfoolery!

96. If the people of the towns had but believed and feared Allah, We should indeed have opened out to them (All kinds of) blessings from heaven and earth; but they rejected (the truth), and We brought them to book for their misdeeds.

97. Did the people of the towns feel secure against the coming(1067) of Our wrath by night while they were asleep?

1067 This and the two following verses should be read together. They furnish a commentary on the story of the five Prophets that has already been related. Allah's

wrath may come by night or by day, whether people are arrogantly defying Allah's laws or are sunk in lethargy or vain dreams of unreality. Who can escape Allah's Plan, and who can feel themselves outside it except those who are seeking their own ruin?

98. Or else did they feel secure against its coming in broad daylight while they played about (care-free)?

99. Did they then feel secure against the plan of Allah.- but no one can feel secure from the Plan of Allah, except those (doomed) to ruin!(1068)

1068 This closes that chapter of the narrative which deals with Prophets who were rejected by their own people, but who stood firm on Allah's message and were able to rescue a remnant who believed. In each case there were special circumstances and special besetting sins, which have been explained in the notes. The nations which as a body could not be won over to Allah's Law perished. So far we have been dealing with the corruptions and iniquities within each nation. In the story of Moses we have first a struggle against the bondage of Egypt , one of the foremost powers then in the world, the rescue of the Israelites and their wanderings, and their proving themselves unworthy and being left to wander in a new sense when they rejected the new Prophet (Muhammad) who came to renew Allah's Message.

100. To those who inherit the earth in succession to its (previous) possessors, is it not a guiding, (lesson) that, if We so willed, We could punish them (too) for their sins, and seal up their hearts so that they could not hear?(1069)

1069 The stories which have been related should give a warning to present and future generations which have inherited the land, the power, or the experience of the past. They should know that if they fall into the same sins they will meet with the same fate: when through their contumacy their hearts are hardened, they do not listen to the advice that falls on their ears *(Cf.* 2:7 and 40:35).

101. Such were the towns whose story We (thus) relate unto thee: There came indeed to them their messengers with clear (signs): But they would not believe what they had rejected before.(1070) Thus doth Allah seal up the hearts of those who reject faith.

1070 Those who have heard the Message and rejected it find it more difficult afterwards to retrace their steps. Evil has blocked the channels of Allah's grace to them. It begins with their breaking their Covenant with Allah; with each step afterwards they fall deeper and deeper into the mire *(Cf.* 41:5).

102. Most of them We found not men (true) to their covenant: but most of them We found rebellious and disobedient.

103. Then after them We sent Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they wrongfully rejected them: So see what was the end of those who made mischief.

104. Moses(1071) said: "O Pharaoh!(1072) I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds,-

1071 The story of Moses is told in many places in the Holy Qur'an, with a special lesson in each context. In 2:49 -71, the story is an appeal to the Jews from their own scripture and traditions, to show their true place in the religious history of mankind, and how they forfeited it. Here we have an instructive parallelism in that story to the story of Muhammad's mission—how both these men of Allah had to fight against (1) a foreign foe, arrogant, unjust, faithless, and superstitious, and (2) against the same class of internal foe among their own people. Both of them won through. In the case of Moses, the foreign foe was Pharaoh and his Egyptians, who boasted of their earlier and superior civilisation; in the case of the Prophet Muhammad the foreign foes were the Jews themselves and the Christians of his day. Moses led his people nearly to the Land of promise in spite of rebellions among his own people; Muhammad succeeded completely in overcoming the resistance of his own people by his own virtues and firmness of character, and by the guidance of Allah. What was a hope when these Makkan verses were revealed became an accomplishment before the end of his life and mission on earth.

1072 "Pharaoh" (Arabic. *Fir'awn)* is a dynastic title, not the name of any particular king in Egypt . It has been traced to the ancient Hieroglyphic words, *Per-7ia,* which mean "Great House." The *nun* is an "infirm" letter added in the process of Arabisation. Who was the Pharaoh in the story of Moses? If the Inscriptions had helped us, we could have answered with some confidence, but unfortunately the Inscriptions fail us. It is probable that it was an early Pharaoh of the XVIIIth Dynasty, say Thothmes I, about 1540 B.C. See Appendix IV, on Egyptian Chronology and Israel , printed at the end of this Surah.

105. One for whom it is right to say nothing but truth about Allah. Now have I come unto you (people), from(1073) your Lord, with a clear (Sign): So let the Children of Israel depart along with me."

1073 Notice that Moses, in addressing Pharaoh and the Egyptians, claims his mission to be not from *his* God, or *his people's* God but from *"your* Lord," from "the Lord of the Worlds," And his mission is not to *his* people only: "I come unto *you* (Egyptian people) from *your* Lord." The spirit of our version is entirely different from the spirit of the same story as told in the Old Testament, (Exod. chapters 1-15). In Exod. 3:18, the mission of Moses is expressed to be as from "the Lord God of the Hebrews."

The essence of the whole Islamic story is this: Joseph's sufferings and good fortune were not merely a story in a romance. Joseph was a prophet; his sufferings and his subsequent rise to power and position in Egypt were to be a lesson (a) to his wicked brothers who sold him into slavery, (b) to his people who were stricken with famine and found a welcome in Egypt, and (c) to the Egyptians, who were arrogant over their high material civilisation, but had yet to be taught the pure faith of Abraham. Israel prospered in Egypt , and stayed there perhaps two to four centuries. (Renan allows only one century). Times changed, and the racial bigotry of the Egyptians showed its head again, and Israel was oppressed. Moses was raised up with a threefold mission again (a) to learn all the learning of the Egyptians and preach Allah's Truth to them as one who had been brought up among themselves, (b) to unite and reclaim his own people, and (c) to rescue them and lead them to a new world, which was to open out their spiritual horizon and lead them to the Psalms of David and the glories of Solomon.

106. (Pharaoh) said: "If indeed thou hast come with a Sign, show it forth,- if thou tellest the truth."(1074)

1074 The ensuing dialogue shows the psychology on the two sides. Pharaoh is sitting in his court, with his ministers and chiefs around him. In their arrogance they are only amused at the effrontery and apparent revolt of the Israelite leaders, and they rely upon their own superior worldly power, aided by the magic which was a part of the Egyptian religion. Confronting them stand two men, Moses with his mission from Allah, and his brother Aaron who was his lieutenant. They are confident, not in their own powers, but in the mission they had received. The first thing they have to do is to act on the subjective mind of the Egyptians, and by methods which by Allah's miracle show that Egyptian magic was nothing before the true power of Allah.

107. Then (Moses) threw his rod, and behold! it was a serpent, plain (for all to see)!(1075)

1075 The serpent played a large part in Egyptian mythology. The great sun-god Ra won a great victory over the serpent Apophis, typifying the victory of light over darkness. Many of their gods and goddesses took the forms of snakes to impress their foes with terror. Moses's rod as a type of a serpent at once appealed to the Egyptian mentality. The contempt which the Egyptians had entertained in their minds before was converted into terror. Here was someone who could control the reptile which their great god Ra himself had such difficulty in overcoming! *(Cf.* 20:20).

108. And he drew out his hand, and behold! it was white to all beholders!(1076)

1076 But the second Sign displayed by Moses was even more puzzling to the Egyptians, Moses drew out his hand from the folds of the garments on his breast, and it was white and shining as with divine light! This was to counter any suggestions of evil, which the serpent might have created. This was no work of evil - of black magic, or a trick or illusion. His hand was transfigured-with a light which no Egyptian sorcerers could produce. In Islam the "white hand" of Moses has passed into a proverb, for a symbol of divine glory dazzling to the beholders.

109. Said the Chiefs of the people of Pharaoh: "This is indeed a sorcerer well- versed.

110. "His plan is to get you out of your land: then what is it ye counsel?"(1077)

1077 The two Signs had the desired effect on the Egyptians. They were impressed, but they judged them by their own standards. They thought to themselves, "These are ordinary sorcerers: let us search out our best sorcerers and show them that they have superior powers." But like all worldly people, they began

to fear for their own power and possessions. It was far from Moses's intention to drive out the Egyptians from their own land. He merely wanted to end the Egyptian oppression. But the Egyptians had a guilty conscience, and they judged other people's motives by their own. They discussed the matter in council on quite wrong premises.

111. They said: "Keep him and his brother in suspense (for a while); and send to the cities men to collect-

112. And bring up to thee all (our) sorcerers well-versed."(1078)

1078 The advice of the Council to Pharaoh shows a misreading of the situation. They were in a panic about what the magic of this evidently powerful sorcerer could do against them. So they advised the Pharaoh to summon their most powerful sorcerers from all over the country, and in the meantime to hold Moses and Aaron in suspense — neither to yield to them nor definitely to oppose them. The Prophets of Allah could well afford to wait. Time is always in favour of Truth. (R).

113. So there came the sorcerers to Pharaoh: They said, "of course we shall have a (suitable) reward if we win!"(1079)

1079 The most noted sorcerers of Pharaoh came. Their art was built up on trickery and imposture, and the first thing they could think of was to make a selfish bargain for themselves. The Pharaoh and his Council would, in their present state of panic, agree to anything. And so they did. Pharaoh not only promised them any rewards they desired if they foiled the strange power of these men, but he also promised them the highest dignities round his own person. And so the contest begins, with due observance of the amenities observed by combatants before they come to close grips.

114. He said: "Yea, (and more),- for ye shall in that case be (raised to posts) nearest (to my person)."

115. They said: "O Moses! wilt thou throw (first), or shall we have the (first) throw?"

116. Said Moses: "Throw ye (first)." So when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and struck terror into them: for they showed a great (feat of) magic.(1080)

1080 Moses and his brother Aaron were pitted against the most skillful magic-men of Egypt, but they were calm and confident and let the magic-men have their innings first As is usual in this world, the magicians trickery made a great impression on the people, but when Moses threw his rod, the illusion was broken, and the falsehood was all shown up. In the Old Testament story (Exod. 7:10 -12) it was Aaron that threw the rod, and he threw it before the magicians. Aaron's rod became a serpent. Then the magicians threw their rods, and they became serpents, but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. The story given to us is more dramatic and less literal. We are told in general terms that Moses first allowed the magic-men to play their tricks. The rod of Moses was the symbol of his authority. It must have been a simple shepherd's crook with which he used to feed his flocks. With Allah's grace behind him, he was able to expose all false trickery and establish the Truth.

117. We put it into Moses´s mind by inspiration: "Throw (now) thy rod":and behold! it swallows up straight away all the falsehoods which they fake!

118. Thus truth was confirmed, and all that they did was made of no effect.

119. So the (great ones) were vanquished there and then, and were made to look small.(1081)

1081 The proud ones of the Court - Pharaoh and his chiefs - were hard-hearted, and the exposure of the imposture only made them wreak their rage on those whom they could reach. On the other hand the effect on the humbler ones - those who had been made the dupes and instruments of the imposture - was quite different. Their conscience was awakened. They fell down to the ground in adoration of the Lord of the. Worlds, and confessed their faith.

120. But the sorcerers fell down prostrate in adoration.

121. Saying: "We believe in the Lord of the Worlds,-

122. "The Lord of Moses and Aaron."

123. Said Pharaoh: "Believe ye in Him before I give you permission? Surely this is a trick which ye have planned in the city to drive out its people: but soon shall ye know (The consequences).(1082)

1082 Pharaoh and his Court were doubly angry: first because they were made to look small when confronted by the power of Allah, and secondly, because their dupes and instruments were snatched away from them. These men, the sorcerers, at once recognised the Signs of Allah, and in their case the mission of Moses and Aaron was fulfilled. They turned back on their past life of imposture, make-believe, false worship, and oppression of the weak, and confessed the One true God. As usually happens, hardened sinners resent all the more the saving of any of their companions from sin and error. Judging other people's motives by their own, they accuse them of duplicity, and if they have the power, they take cruel revenge. Here the Pharaoh threatens the repentant sinners with the extreme punishment for treason and apostasy (cutting off of hands and feet, combined with an ignominious death on the cross, as in the case of the worst malefactors). But they remained firm, and prayed to Allah for patience and constancy. Probably their influence spread quietly in the commonality. Ultimately it appeared on the Throne itself, in the person of Amenophis IV about five or six generations afterwards. See Appendix V, on Egyptian Religion, printed at the end of this Surah.

124. "Be sure I will cut off your hands and your feet on apposite sides, and I will cause you all to die on the cross."

125. They said: "For us, We are but sent back unto our Lord:

126. "But thou dost wreak thy vengeance on us simply because we believed in the Signs of our Lord when they reached us! Our Lord! pour out on us patience and constancy, and take our souls unto thee as Muslims (who bow to Thy Will)!(1083)

1083 These Egyptians, by their patience and constancy, show that their repentance was true. Thus in their case the mission of Moses was fulfilled directly, and their number must have amounted to a considerable figure. They were martyrs to their faith, and their martyrdom affected their nation in two ways. In the first place, as they were the pick of those who practised the false superstition in Egypt , their conversion and disappearance dealt a staggering blow to the whole system. Secondly, the indirect effect of their martyrdom on the commonalty of Egypt must have been far greater than can be measured by numbers. The banner of Allah was planted, and the silent spiritual fight must have gone on ever since, though history, in recording outward events, is silent on the slow and gradual processes of transformation undergone by Egyptian religion. From a chaotic pantheon of animals and animal gods, the worship of the sun and the heavenly bodies, and the worship of the Pharaoh as the embodiment of power, they gradually came to realise the oneness and mercy of the true God. After many glimpses of Monotheism on Egyptian soil itself, the Gospel of Jesus reached them, and eventually Islam.

127. Said the chiefs of Pharaoh´s people: "Wilt thou leave Moses and his people, to spread mischief in the land, and to abandon thee and thy gods?" He said: "Their male children will we slay; (only) their females will we save alive; and we have over them (power) irresistible."(1084)

1084 Pharaoh's order against the sorcerers was drastic enough. But his Council is not satisfied. What about Moses and the Israelites? They had a seeming victory, and will now be more mischievous than ever. They appeal to Pharaoh's vanity and his superstition and sense of power. "If you leave them alone," they say, "where will be your authority? You and your gods will be defied!" Pharaoh has a ready answer. He was really inwardly cowed by the apparent power of Moses. He dared not openly act against him. But he had already, before the birth of Moses, passed a cunning order to destroy the whole people of Israel . Through the instrumentality of midwives (Exod. 1:15), all the male children were to be destroyed, and the females would then be for the Egyptians: the race of Israel would thus be at an end. This order was still in force, and would remain in force until the despised race was absorbed. But Egyptian cunning and wickedness had no power against Allah's Plan for those who had faith. See verse 129.

128. Said Moses to his people: "Pray for help from Allah, and (wait) in patience and constancy: for the earth is Allah.s, to give as a heritage to such of His servants as He pleaseth; and the end is (best) for the righteous.(1085)

1085 Notice the contrast between the arrogant tone of Pharaoh and the humility and faith taught by Moses. In the end the arrogance was humbled, and humility and faith were protected and advanced.

129. They said: "We have had (nothing but) trouble, both before and after thou camest(1086) to us." He said: "It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you inheritors(1087) in the earth; that so He may try you by your deeds."

1086 There is a slight note of querulousness in the people's answer. But Moses allays it by his own example and courage, and his vision of the future: which was amply fulfilled in time. See verse 137.

1087 The Israelites, despised and enslaved, were to be rescued and made rulers in Palestine . David and Solomon were great kings and played a notable part in history. But the greatness of Israel was conditional; they were to be judged by their deeds. When they fell from grace, other people were given honour and power. And so is came to be the turn of the Arab race, and so on. Allah gives His gifts to those who are righteous and obey His Law.

130. We punished the people of Pharaoh with years (of droughts) and shortness of crops; that they might receive admonition.

131. But when good (times) came, they said, "This is due to us;" When gripped by calamity, they ascribed it to evil omens connected with Moses and those with him! Behold! in truth the omens of evil are theirs(1088) in Allah.s sight, but most of them do not understand!

1088 Their superstition ascribed the punishment of their own wickedness to some evil omen. They thought Moses and his people brought them ill-luck. They did not look within themselves to see the root of evil, and the cause of their punishment! So it happens in all ages. People blame the righteous for something which they do, different from other men, instead of searching out their own lapses from rectitude, which are punished by Allah, (*Cf.* 36:18-19).

132. They said (to Moses): "Whatever be the Signs thou bringest, to work therewith thy sorcery on us,(1089) we shall never believe in thee.

1089 A type of obstinacy and resistance to Allah's message. As they believed in sorcery and magic, they thought anything unusual was but sorcery and magic, and hardened their hearts against Truth.

133. So We sent (plagues) on them: Wholesale Death,(1090) Locusts, Lice, Frogs, And Blood: Signs openly(1091) self-explained: but they were steeped in arrogance,- a people given to sin.

1090 *Tufan* = a widespread calamity, causing wholesale death and destruction. It may be a flood, or a typhoon, or an epidemic, among men or cattle. Perhaps the last is meant, if we may interpret by the Old Testament story. See also Exod. 9:3, 9, 15; 12:29 .

1091 In 17:101, the reference is to nine Clear Signs. These are: (1) the Rod (7:107), (2) the Radiant Hand (7:108), (3) the years of drought or shortage of water (7:130), (4) short crops (7:130), and the five mentioned in this verse, *viz.,* (5) epidemics among men and beasts, (6) locusts, (7) lice, (8) frogs, and (9) the water turning to blood.

134. Every time the penalty fell on them, they said: "O Moses! on your behalf call on thy Lord in virtue of his promise to thee: If thou wilt remove the penalty from us, we shall truly believe in thee, and we shall send away the Children of Israel with thee."(1092)

1092 The demand of Moses was two-fold: (1) come to Allah and cease from oppression, and (2) let me take Israel out of Egypt . At first it was laughed at and rejected with scorn. When the Plagues came for punishment, each time the Egyptians suffered, they promised amendment and begged Moses to intercede and cause the plague to cease. But every time it ceased, they went back to their evil attitude, until the final retribution came. This is a type of the sinner's attitude for all times.

135. But every time We removed the penalty from them according to a fixed term which they had to fulfil,- (1093) Behold! they broke their word!

1093 The intercession of Moses was limited to prayer. Each plague or penalty had its appointed term in Allah's decree. That term was duly fulfilled before the plague ceased. Allah's law is firm: it does not vacillate like the human will. The intercession only meant two things: (1) that Allah's name was invoked and His presence duly brought home to the mind and heart of the sinner who promised repentance, and (2) that the sinner was given a further chance if the prayer was accepted. This again is a universal truth.

136. So We exacted retribution from them: We drowned them(1094) in the sea, because they rejected Our Signs and failed to take warning from them.(1095)

1094 When at last Israel left Egypt , they selected, not the highway to Canaan, along the Mediterranean and by Gaza , because they were unarmed and would have encountered immediate opposition there, but by way of the wilderness of Sinai. They crossed the Red Sea , while Pharaoh's host which came in pursuit was drowned. *Cf.* 2:50 . (R).

1095 Where was the Council of Pharaoh held in which Moses addressed Pharaoh? Egypt 's primary capital in the XVIIIth Dynasty was Thebes (= No-Ammon), but that was more than 400 miles to the south of the Delta, in whose corner Israel dwelt. Memphis , on the apex of the Delta, a little south of where Cairo is now, was also over 100 miles from Israel 's habitations. The interview must have been either in a Palace near Goshen, where the Israelites dwelt, or in Zoan (- Tanis), the Deltaic capital built by a former dynasty, which was of course still available for the reigning dynasty, and which was not far from the Israelite settlement.

137. And We made a people, considered weak (and of no account), inheritors of lands in both east and west, - lands whereon We sent down Our blessings. The fair promise of thy Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel, because they had patience and constancy, and We levelled to the ground the great works and fine buildings which Pharaoh and his people erected (with such pride).(1096)

1096 Israel , which was despised, became a great and glorious nation under Solomon. He had goodly territory, and was doubly-blest. His land and people were prosperous, and he was blessed with wisdom from Allah. His sway and his fame spread east and west. And thus Allah's promise to Israel was fulfilled. Note that Syria and Palestine had once been under the sway of Egypt . At the same time the proud and rebellious Pharaoh and his people were brought low. The splendid monuments which they had erected with so much skill and pride were mingled with the dust Their great cities -Thebes (or No-Ammon), Memphis (or Noph, sacred to the Bull of Osiris), and the other splendid cities, became as if they had not existed, and archaeologists have had to dig up their ruins from the sands. The splendid monuments-temples, palaces, tombs, statues, columns, and stately structures of all kinds-were buried in the sands. Even monuments like the Great Sphinx, which seem to defy the ages, were partly buried in the sands, and owe their rescue to the comparatively recent researches of archaeologists. As late as 1743 Richard Pococke in his *Travels in Egypt* (p. 41), remarked: "Most of those pyramids are very much ruined." (R).

138. We took the Children of Israel (with safety) across the sea. They came upon a people devoted entirely to some idols(1097) they had. They said: "O Moses! fashion for us a god like unto the gods they have." He said: "Surely ye are a people without knowledge.

1097 Who were these people? We are now in the Sinai Peninsula . Two conjectures are possible: (1) The Amalekites of the Sinai Peninsula were at perpetual war with the Israelites. They were probably an idolatrous nation, but we have very little knowledge of their cult; (2) From Egyptian history we know that Egypt had worked from very ancient times some copper mines in Sinai. An Egyptian settlement may have been here. Like all mining camps it contained from the beginning the dregs of the population. When the mines ceased to be worked, the settlement, or what remained of it, must have degenerated further. Cut off from civilisation, its cult must have become still narrower, without the refining influences which a progressive nation applies even to its idolatry. Perhaps Apis,

the sacred bull of Memphis , lost all its allegorical meaning for them, and only gross and superstitious rites remained among them. The text speaks of *"some idols they had,"* implying that they had merely a detached fragment of a completer religion. This was a snare in the path of the Israelites, whom many generations of slavery in Egypt had debased into ignorance and superstition.

139. "As to these folk,- the cult they are in is (but) a fragment of a ruin,(1098) and vain is the (worship) which they practise."

1098 If conjecture 2 in the last note is correct, this idolatrous worship was but the fragment of a ruin from Egypt, and Moses's reproach is biting: 'You, who have been rescued from the bondage of living Egypt-do you hanker after the bondage of a dead cult debased even from that from which you have been rescued?"

Mutabbar- broken in pieces, smashed into fragments, destroyed.

140. He said: "Shall I seek for you a god other than the (true) Allah, when it is Allah Who hath endowed you with gifts above the nations?"

141. And remember We rescued you from Pharaoh´s people, who afflicted you with the worst of penalties, who slew your male children and saved alive your females: in that was a momentous trial from your Lord.(1099)

1099 This is Allah's reminder to Israel through the mouth of Moses. There was a double trial: (1) while the bondage lasted, the people were to learn patience and constancy in the midst of affliction; (2) when they were rescued, they were to learn humility, justice, and righteous deeds of prosperity.

142. We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and completed (the period) with ten (more): thus was completed the term (of communion) with his Lord,(1100) forty nights. And Moses had charged his brother Aaron (before he went up): "Act for me amongst my people: Do right, and follow not the way of those who do mischief."(1101)

1100 The forty nights' communion of Moses with Allah on the Mount may be compared with the forty-day fast of Jesus in the wilderness before he took up his ministry (Matt. 4:2), and with the forty years of Al Mustafa's preparation in life before he took up his Ministry. In each case the Prophets lived alone apart from their people, before they came into the full blaze of the events of their Ministry.

1101 When for any reason the man of God is absent from his people, his duty of leadership *(khildfah)* should be taken up by his brother - not necessarily a blood-brother, but one of his society or brotherhood. The deputy should discharge it in all humility, remembering three things: f 1) that he is only a deputy, and bound to follow the directions of his Principal, (2) that right and justice are the essence of power, and (3) that mischief gets its best chance to raise its head in the absence of the Principal, and that the deputy should always guard against the traps laid for him in the Principal's absence.

143. When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him, He said: "O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon Thee."(1102) Allah said: "By no means canst thou see Me (direct); But look upon the mount; if it abide in its place, then shalt thou see Me."(1103) When his Lord manifested His glory on the Mount, He made it as dust. And Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered his senses he said: "Glory be to Thee! to Thee I turn in repentance, and I am the first to believe."(1104)

1102 Even the best of us may be betrayed into overweening confidence or spiritual ambition not yet justified by the stage we have reached. Moses had already seen part of the glory of Allah in his Radiant White Hand, that shone with the glory of Divine light (7:108, n. 1076). But he was still in the flesh, and the mission to his people was to begin after the Covenant of Sinai. It was premature of him to ask to see Allah.

1103 But Allah-the Cherisher of all His creatures-treats even our improper requests with mercy, compassion, and understanding. Even the reflected glory of Allah is too great for the grosser substance of matter. The peak on which it shone became as powder before the ineffable glory, and Moses could only live by being taken out of his bodily senses. When he recovered from his swoon, he saw the true position, and the distance between our grosser bodily senses and the true splendour of Allah's glory. He at once turned in penitence to Allah, and confessed his faith. Having been blinded by the excessive Glory, he could not see with the physical eye. But he could get a glimpse of the reality through faith, and he hastened to proclaim his faith, *(Cf.* 59:21). (R).

1104 *"First to believe." Cf,* the expression "first of those who bow to Allah in Islam" in 6:14 and 6:163. "First" means here not the first in time, but most zealous in faith. It has the intensive and not the comparative meaning.

144. ((Allah)) said: "O Moses! I have chosen thee above (other) men,(1105) by the mission I (have given thee) and the words I (have spoken to thee): take then the (revelation) which I give thee, and be of those who give thanks."(1106)

1105 *"Above (other) men': i.e.* among his contemporaries. He had a high mission, and he had the honour of speaking to Allah.

1106 Allah's revelation is for the benefit of His creatures, who should receive it with reverence and gratitude. While Moses was having these great spiritual experiences on the Mount, his people below were ungrateful enough to forget Allah and make a golden calf for worship (7:148).

145. And We ordained laws for him in the tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things, (and said): "Take and hold these with firmness, and enjoin thy people to hold fast by the best in the precepts:(1107) soon shall I show you(1108) the homes of the wicked,-(1109) (How they lie desolate)."

1107 The Tablets of the Law contained the essential spiritual Truth, from which were derived the positive injunctions and prohibitions, explanations and interpretations, which it was the function of the prophetic office to hold up for the people to follow. The precepts would contain, as the *Shari 'ah* does, matters absolutely prohibited, matters not prohibited but disapproved, matters about which there was no prohibition or injunction, but in which conduct was to be regulated by circumstances; matters of positive and universal duty, matters recommended for those whose zeal was sufficient to enable them to work on higher than minimum standards, and matters which were sought by persons of the highest spiritual eminence. No soul is burdened beyond its capacity; but we are asked to seek the best and highest possible for us in conduct.

1108 Notice the transition from the "We" of authority and honour and impersonal dignity, to the "I" of personal concern in specially guiding the righteous, *(Cf.* 2:38).

1109 There are two meanings, one literal and the other figurative. Literally, the homes of the wicked, both individuals and nations, lie desolate, as in the case of the ancient Egyptians, the 'Ad, and the Thamud. Figuratively, the "home" shows the inner and more intimate condition of people. If you are dazzled by the outward prosperity of the ungodly, examine their inner anguish and fear and insecurity, and you will thank Allah for His gracious guidance.

146. Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right - them will I turn away from My signs:(1110) Even if they see all the signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of right conduct, they will not adopt it as the way; but if they see the way of error, that is the way they will adopt. For they have rejected(1111) our signs, and failed to take warning from them.

1110 The argument may be simplified thus in paraphrase. The right is established on the earth as Allah created it: Nature recognises and obeys Allah's law as fixed for each portion of Creation. But man, because of the gift of Will, sometimes upsets this balance. The root-cause is his arrogance, as it was in the case of IblTs. Allah's Signs are everywhere, but if they are rejected with scorn and blasphemy, Allah will withdraw His grace, for sin hardens the heart and makes it impervious to the truth. Want of faith produces a kind of blindness to spiritual facts, a kind of deafness to the warnings of a Day of Account. If we had contumaciously rejected faith, can we hope for anything but justice—the just punishment of our sins? (R).

1111 *Rejected Our Signs:* again a return to the Plural of impersonal Dignity and Authority, from the singular of personal concern in granting grace and guidance to the righteous.

147. Those who reject Our signs and the meeting in the Hereafter,- vain are their deeds: Can they expect to be rewarded except as they have wrought?

148. The people of Moses made, in his absence, out of their ornaments,(1112) the image of calf, (for worship):(1113) it seemed to low: did they(1114) not see that it could neither speak to them, nor show them the way? They took it for worship and they did wrong.

1112 The making of the golden calf and its worship by the Israelites during the absence of Moses on the Mount were referred to in 2:51 and some further details are given in 20:83-97. Notice how in each case only those points are referred to which are necessary to the argument in hand. A narrator whose object is mere narration, tells the story in all its details, and is done with it. A consummate artist, whose object is to enforce lessons, brings out each point in its proper place. Master of all details, he does not ramble, but with supreme literary skills, just adds the touch that is necessary in each place to complete the spiritual picture. His object is not a story but a lesson. Here notice the contrast between the intense spiritual communion of Moses on the Mount and the simultaneous corruption of his people in his absence. We can understand his righteous indignation and bitter grief (7:150). The people had melted all their gold ornaments, and made the image of a calf like the bull of Osiris in the city of Memphis in the wicked Egypt that they had turned their backs upon.

1113 *Image of a Calf:Jasad is* literally a body, especially the body of a man according to Khalil quoted by al Ragvhib. In 21:8 it is used obviously for the human body, as also in 38:34; but in the latter case, the idea of an image, without any real life or soul, is also suggested. In the present passage I understand many suggestions: (1) that it was a mere image, without life; (2) as such, it could not low, therefore the appearance of lowing, mentioned immediately afterwards, was a fraud; (3) unlike its prototype, the bull of Osiris, it had not even the symbolism of Osiris behind it; the Osiris myth, in the living religion of Egypt, had at least some ethical principles behind it.

1114 The lowing of the golden calf was obviously a deception practised by the Egyptian promoters of the cult. Lytton in his "Last Days of Pompeii" exposes the deception practised by the priests of Isis . Men hidden behind images imposed on the credulity of the commonalty.

149. When they repented, and saw that they had erred, they said: "If our Lord have not mercy upon us and forgive us, we shall indeed be of those who perish."

150. When Moses came back to his people, angry and grieved, he said: "Evil it is that ye have done in my place in my absence: did ye(1115) make haste to bring on the judgment of your Lord?" He put down the Tablets,(1116) seized his brother by (the hair of) his head, and dragged him(1117) to him. Aaron said: "Son of my mother! the people did indeed reckon me as naught, and went near to slaying me! Make not the enemies rejoice over my misfortune, nor count thou me amongst the people of sin."(1118)

1115 *Didye make haste . . .* ? 'In your impatience, could you not wait for me? Your lapse into idolatry has only hastened Allah's wrath. If you had only waited. I was bringing to you in the Tablets the most excellent teaching in the commands of Allah.' There is subtle irony in the speech of Moses. There is also a play upon words: *'ijl*= calf; and *'ajila* = to make haste: no translation can bring out these niceties.

1116 *Put down the Tablets:* we are not told that the Tablets were broken; in fact 7:154 (below) shows that they were whole. They contained Allah's Message. There is a touch of disrespect (if not blasphemy) in supposing that Allah's Messenger broke the Tablets in his incontinent rage, as is stated in the Old Testament: "Moses's anger waxed hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands, and brake them beneath the Mount." (Exod. 32:10). On this point and also on the point that Aaron (in the Old Testament story) ordered the gold to be brought, made a molten calf, fashioned it with a graving tool, and built an altar before the calf, (Exod. 32:2-5), our version differs from that of the Old Testament. We cannot believe that Aaron, who was appointed by Allah to assist Moses as Allah's Messenger, could descend so low as to seduce the people into idolatry, whatever his human weaknesses might be.

1117 Moses was but human. Remembering the charge he had given to Aaron (7:142) he had a just grievance at the turn events had taken. But he did not wreak his vengeance on the Tablets of Allah's Law by breaking them. He laid hands on his brother, and his brother at once explained, *(Cf.* 20:94).

1118 Aaron's speech is full of tenderness and regret. He addresses Moses as "son of my mother"- an affectionate term. He explains how the turbulent people nearly killed him for resisting them. And he states in the clearest terms that the idolatry neither originated with him nor had his consent. In 20:85 we are told that a fellow described as the Samiri had led them astray. We shall discuss this when we come to that passage.

151. Moses prayed: "O my Lord! forgive me and my brother!(1119) admit us to Thy mercy! for Thou art the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!"

1119 As Moses was convinced that his brother was guiltless, his wrath was turned to gentleness. He prayed for forgiveness-for himself and his brother: for himself because of his wrath and for his brother because he had been unable to suppress idolatry among his people. And like a true leader that he is, he identifies himself with his lieutenant for all that has happened. Even more, he identifies himself with his whole people in his prayer in verse 155 below. Herein, again, is a type of what the Holy Prophet Muhammad did for his people.

152. Those who took the calf (for worship) will indeed be overwhelmed with wrath from their Lord, and with shame in this life:(1120) thus do We recompense those who invent (falsehoods).

1120 The consequences were twofold: (1) spiritual, in that Allah's grace is withdrawn, and (2) even in the present life of this world, in that godly men also shun the sinner's company, and he is isolated.

153. But those who do wrong but repent thereafter and (truly) believe,- verily thy Lord is thereafter Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

154. When the anger of Moses was appeased, he took up the tablets: in the writing thereon was guidance and Mercy for such as fear their Lord.

155. And Moses chose seventy(1121) of his people for Our place of meeting: when they were seized with violent quaking,(1122) he prayed: "O my Lord! if it had been Thy will Thou couldst have destroyed, long before, both them and me: wouldst Thou destroy us for the deeds of the foolish ones among us? This is no more than(1123) Thy trial: by it Thou causest whom Thou wilt to stray,(1124) and Thou leadest whom Thou wilt into the right path. Thou art our Protector: so forgive us and give us Thy mercy; for Thou art the best of those who forgive.

1121 Seventy of the elders were taken up to the Mount, but left at some distance from the place where Allah spoke to Moses. They were to be silent witnesses, but their faith was not yet complete, and they dared to say to Moses: "We shall never believe in thee until we see Allah in public" (2:55). They were dazed with thunder and lightning, and might have been destroyed but for Allah's mercy on the intercession of Moses.

1122 *Rajfah:* violent quaking, earthquake. I take it to refer to the same event as is described by the word *Sa'iqah* in 2:55 , the thunder and lightning that shook the mountainside.

1123 Moses was guiltless, but he identifies himself with his whole people, and intercedes with Allah on their behalf. He recognises that it was a trial, in which some of his people failed to stand the test. Such failure was worthy of punishment. But he pleads for mercy for such as erred from weakness and not from contumacy, and were truly repentant, although all who erred were in their several degrees worthy of punishment.

1124 Cf. 2:26.

156. "And ordain for us that which is good, in this life and in the Hereafter: for we have turned unto Thee." He said: "With My punishment I visit whom I will; but My mercy extendeth(1125) to all things. That (mercy) I shall ordain for those who do right, and practise regular charity, and those who believe in Our signs;-(1126)

1125 Allah's mercy is in and for all things. All nature subserves a common purpose, which is for the good of all His creatures. Our faculties and our understandings are all instances of His grace and mercy. Each unit or factor among His creatures benefits from the others and receives them as Allah's mercy

to itself; and in its turn, each contributes to the benefit of the others and is thus an instance of Allah's mercy to them. His mercy is universal and all-pervasive; while His justice and punishment are reserved for those who swerve from His plan and (to use a medieval juridicial formula) go out of His Peace.

1126 The personal grace and mercy— and their opposite—are referred to the singular pronoun "I", while the impersonal Law, by which Allah's Signs operate in His universe, is referred to the plural pronoun of authority and dignity, "We".

157. "Those who follow the messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures),-(1127) in the law and the Gospel;- for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure); He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes(1128) that are upon them. So it is those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him,-(1129) it is they who will prosper."(1130)

1127 In this verse is a prefiguring, to Moses, of the Arabian Messenger, the last and greatest of the Messengers of Allah. Prophecies about him will be found in the *Tawrah* and the *Injil.* In the reflex of the *Tawrah* as now accepted by the Jews, Moses says: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me" (Deut. 18:15): the only Prophet who brought a Shari'ah like that of Moses was Muhammad al Mustafa, and he came of the house of Isma'il, the brother of Isaac, the father of Israel. In the reflex of the Gospel as now accepted by the Christians, Christ promised another Comforter, (John 14:16): the Greek word *Paraclete* which the Christians interpret as referring to the Holy Spirit is by our Doctors taken to be *Periclyte,* which would be the Greek form of Ahmad. See 61:6 and n. 416 to 3:81.

1128 *(Cf.* 13:5) *Aghlal:* plural of *ghullun,* a yoke, an iron collar. In the formalism and exclusiveness of the Jews there were many restrictions which were removed by Islam, a religion for freedom in the faith of Allah, of universality in the variety of races, languages, manners and customs,

1129 *Light which is sent down with him:* the words are "with him", not "to him", emphasising the fact that the Light which he brought illumines everyone who has the privilege of joining his great and universal Fellowship.

1130 *Falah* = prosperity in its general sense as well as in its spiritual sense. In the general sense it means that right conduct is the only door to happiness and well-being. In the spiritual sense it means that Faith and its fruits (right conduct) are the only gates to salvation.

158. day: "O men! I am sent(1131) unto you all, as the Messenger of Allah, to Whom belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth: there is no god but He: it is He That giveth both life and death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Unlettered Prophet,(1132) who believeth in Allah and His words: follow him that (so) ye may be guided."

1131 Our attention having been directed to various prophets, who were sent with missions to their several peoples, and in each of whose careers there is some prefigurement of the life of the last and greatest of them, we are now asked to listen to the proclamation of Muhammad's universal mission. We contemplate no longer, after this, partial truths. It is not now a question of saving Israel from the bondage of Egypt, nor teaching Midian the ethics of business, nor reclaiming the people of Lut from sexual sin or Thamud from the sin of oppression in power, or 'Ad from arrogance and ancestor-worship. Now are set forth plainly the issues of Life and Death, the Message of Allah, the One Universal God to all mankind.

1132 "Unlettered," as applied to the Prophet here and inverse 157 above, has three special significations. (1) He was not versed in human learning; yet he was full of the highest wisdom, and had a most wonderful knowledge of the previous Scriptures. This was a proof of his inspiration. It was a miracle of the highest kind, a "Sign", which everyone could test then, and everyone can test now. (2) All organised human knowledge tends to be crystallised, to acquire a partial bias or flavour of some "school" of thought. The highest Teacher had to be free from any such taint, just as a clean slate is necessary if a perfectly clear and bold message has to be written on it. (3) In 3:20 and 62:2, the epithet is applied to the Pagan Arabs, because, before the advent of Islam, they were unlearned. That the last and greatest of the Prophets should arise among them, and they and their language be made the vehicle of the new, full and universal light, has also a meaning, which is explained in C. 12-16.

159. Of the people of Moses there is a section who guide and do justice in the light of truth.

160. We divided them into twelve tribes(1133) or nations. We directed Moses by inspiration, when his (thirsty) people asked him for water: "Strike the rock with thy staff": out of it there gushed forth twelve springs: Each group knew its own place for water. We gave them the shade of clouds, and sent down to them manna and quails, (saying): "Eat of the good things We have provided for you": (but they rebelled); to Us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.(1134)

1133 We now come to some incidents in Jewish history, which have been referred to in 2:57 -60. Here they have special reference to their bearing on the times when early Islam was preached. The Twelve Tribes and the parable drawn from them have been explained in n. 73 to 2:60.

1134 *Cf.* 2:57 and n. 71, and 20:81.

161. And remember it was said to them: "Dwell in this town and eat(1135) therein as ye wish, but say the word of humility and enter the gate in a posture of humility: We shall forgive you your faults; We shall increase (the portion of) those who do good."

1135 As in 7:19 , we may construe "eat" here to mean not only eating literally, but enjoying the good things of life.

162. But the transgressors among them changed the word from that which had been given them so we sent on them a plague from heaven. For that they repeatedly transgressed.(1136)

1136 *Cf.* 2:58 -59, and n. 72. The story is here told by way of parable for the times of Islam. Hence we have a few verbal changes: *e.g.,* "dwell in this town" instead of "enter this town," etc.

163. Ask them concerning the town standing close by the sea. Behold! they transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath.(1137) For on the day of their Sabbath their fish did come to them, openly holding up their heads, but on the day they had no Sabbath, they came not: thus did We make a trial of them, for they were given to transgression.

1137 *Cf.* 2:65 and n. 79. Fishing, like every other activity, was prohibited to Israel on the Sabbath day. As this practice was usually observed, the fish used to come up with a sense of security to their water channels or pools openly on the Sabbath day, but not on other days when fishing was open. This was a great temptation to the law-breakers, which they could not resist. Some of their men of piety protested, but it had no effect. When their transgressions, which, we may suppose, extended to other commandments, passed beyond bounds, the punishment came. (R).

164. When some of them said: "Why do ye preach to a people whom Allah will destroy or visit with a terrible punishment?"-(1138) said the preachers:" To discharge our duty to your Lord, and perchance they may fear Him."

1138 There are always people who wonder, no doubt sincerely, what good it is to preach to the wicked. The answer is given to them here: (1) every man who sees evil must speak out against it; it is his duty and responsibility to Allah; (2) there is always a chance that the warning may have effect and save a precious soul. This passage has a special meaning for the times when our Holy Prophet was preaching in Makkah, apparently without results. But it applies to all times.

165. When they disregarded the warnings that had been given them, We rescued those who forbade Evil; but We visited the wrong-doers with a grievous punishment because they were given to transgression.

166. When in their insolence they transgressed (all) prohibitions, We said to them: "Be ye apes, despised and rejected."(1139)

1139 *Cf.* 2:65, n. 79

167. Behold! thy Lord did declare(1140) that He would send against them, to the Day of Judgment, those who would afflict them with grievous penalty. Thy Lord is quick in retribution, but He is also Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

1140 See Deut. 11:28;"A curse if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God but turn aside out of the way I command you this day"; also Deut. 28:49; "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand"; and many other passages.

168. We broke them up into sections on this earth.(1141) There are among them some that are the righteous, and some that are the opposite. We have tried them with both prosperity and adversity: In order that they might turn (to us).

1141 The dispersal of the Jews is a great fact in the world's history. Neither has their persecution ended yet, nor is it likely to end as far as we can foresee.

169. After them succeeded an (evil) generation: They inherited the Book, but they chose (for themselves)(1142) the vanities of this world, saying (for excuse): "(Everything) will be forgiven us." (Even so), if similar vanities came their way, they would (again) seize them. Was not the covenant(1143) of the Book taken from them, that they would not ascribe to Allah anything but the truth? and they study what is in the Book. But best for the righteous is the home in the Hereafter. Will ye not understand?

1142 Merely inheriting a Book, or doing lip service to it, does not make a nation righteous. If they succumb to the temptations of the world, their hypocrisy becomes all the more glaring. "High finance" is one of these temptations. *Cf.* also 2:80: "the Fire shall not touch us except for a few numbered days": and 2:88, about their blasphemous self-sufficiency.

1143 *Cf.* Exod. 19:5-8; 24:3; 39:27; and many other passages.

170. As to those who hold fast by the Book and establish regular prayer,- never shall We suffer the reward of the righteous to perish.

171. When We shook the Mount over them, as if it had been a canopy, and they thought it was going to fall on them (We said): "Hold firmly(1144) to what We have given you, and bring (ever) to remembrance what is therein;(1145) perchance ye may fear Allah."

1144 *Cf.* 2:63 and n. 78, 2:93, and 5:7.

1145 *Therein* = in the Book or Revelation, in "what We have given you."

172. When thy Lord drew forth(1146) from the Children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): "Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?"- They said: "Yea! We do testify!"(1147) (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: "Of this we were never mindful":

1146 This passage has led to differences of opinion in interpretation. According to the dominant opinion of commentators each individual in the posterity of Adam had a separate existence from the time of Adam, and a Covenant was taken from all of them, which is binding accordingly on each individual. The words in the text refer to the descendants of the Children of Adam, *i.e.,* to all humanity, born or unborn, without any limit of time. Adam's seed carries on the existence of Adam and succeeds to his spiritual heritage. Humanity has been given by Allah certain powers and faculties, whose possession creates on our side special spiritual obligations which we must faithfully discharge: see 5:1. and n. 682. These obligations may from a legal point of view be considered as arising from implied Covenants. In the preceding verse (7:171), a reference was made to the implied Covenant of the Jewish nation. Now we consider the implied Covenant of the whole of humanity, for the Holy Prophet's mission was worldwide. (R).

1147 The Covenant is completed in this way. We acknowledge that Allah is our Creator, Cherisher, and Sustainer: therefore we acknowledge our duty to Him: when we so testify concerning ourselves, the obligation is, as it were, assumed by us; for it follows from our very nature when it is pure and uncorrupted.

173. Or lest ye should say: "Our fathers before us may have taken false gods, but we are (their) descendants after them: wilt Thou then destroy us because of the deeds of men who were futile?"(1148)

1148 The latent faculties in man are enough to teach him the distinction between good and evil, to warn him of the dangers that beset his life. But to awaken and stimulate them, a personal appeal is made to each individual through the "still small voice" within him. This, in its uncorrupted state, acknowledges the truth and, as it were, swears its Covenant with Allah. There is, therefore, no excuse for any individual to say, either (1) that he was unmindful, or (2) that he should not be punished for the sins of his fathers, because his punishment (if any) comes from his personal responsibility and is for his own rejection of faith and the higher spiritual influences. (R).

174. Thus do We explain the signs in detail; and perchance they may turn (unto Us).

175. Relate to them the story(1149) of the man to whom We sent Our signs, but he passed them by: so Satan followed him up, and he went astray.

1149 Commentators differ whether this story or parable refers to a particular individual, and if so, to whom. The story of Balaam, the seer, who was called out by Israel 's enemies to curse Israel , but who blessed Israel instead. (Num. 22, 23, 24) is quite different. It is better to take the parable in general sense. These are men, of talents and position, to whom great opportunities of spiritual insight come, but they perversely pass them by. Satan sees his opportunity and catches them up. Instead of rising higher in the spiritual world, their selfish and worldly desires and ambitions pull them down, and they are lost.

176. If it had been Our will, We should have elevated him with Our signs; but he inclined to the earth, and followed his own vain desires.(1150) His similitude is that of a dog: if you attack him, he lolls out his tongue,(1151) or if you leave him alone, he (still) lolls out his tongue. That is the similitude of those who reject Our signs; So relate the story; perchance they may reflect.

1150 Notice the contrast between the exalted spiritual honours which they would have received from Allah if they had followed His Will, and the earthly desires which eventually bring them low to the position of beasts and worse.

1151 The dog, especially in the hot weather, lolls out his tongue, whether he is attacked and pursued and is tired, or is left alone. It is part of his nature to slobber. So with the man who rejects Allah. Whether he is warned or left alone, he continues to throw out his dirty saliva. The injury he will do will be to his own soul. But there may be infection in his evil example. So we must protect others. And we must never give up hope of his own amendment. So we must continue to warn him and make him think.

177. Evil as an example are people who reject Our signs and wrong their own souls.

178. Whom Allah doth guide,- he is on the right path: whom He rejects from His guidance,- such are the persons who perish.(1152)

1152 Those who reject Allah will be deprived of Allah's grace and guidance. His Mercy is always open for sincere repentance. But with each step downwards, they go lower and lower, until they perish.

179. Many are the Jinns and men we have made for Hell: They have hearts wherewith(1153) they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith

they hear not. They are like cattle,- nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning).

1153 *Cf.* 2:18 . Though they have apparently all the faculties of reason and perception, they have so deadened them that those faculties do not work, and they go headlong into Hell. They are, as it were, made for Hell.

180. The Most Beautiful Names(1154) belong to Allah. so call on him by them; but shun such men as use profanity in his names: for what they do, they will soon be requited.

1154 As we contemplate Allah's nature, we can use the most beautiful names we can think of, to express His attributes. There are ninety-nine of such attributes. In the opening Surah, we have these indicated in a few comprehensive words, such as *al Rahman* (most Gracious), *al Rahim* (most Merciful), *Rabb at 'alamin* (Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds). Our bringing such names to remembrance is part of our Prayer and Praise. But we must not associate with people who use Allah's names profanely, or so as to suggest anything derogatory to His dignity or His unity. *Cf.* 17:110.

181. Of those We have created are people who direct (others) with truth. And dispense justice therewith.

182. Those who reject Our signs, We shall gradually visit with punishment, in ways they perceive not;(1154-A)

1154-A See also 68:44 and n. 5626.

183. Respite will I grant unto them: for My scheme is strong (and unfailing).

184. Do they not reflect? Their companion is not seized(1155) with madness: he is but a perspicuous warner.(1156)

1155 *Their companion, i.e.,* the Holy Prophet, who lived with and amongst them. He was accused of madness because he behaved differently from them. He had no selfish ambitions: he was always true, in thought, words, and deed: he was kind and considerate to the weak, and was not dazzled by worldly power or wealth or position: he was undeterred by fear of the strong, the mockery of the cynics, the bitterness of the evil, or the indifference of the heedless. That is why he stood out boldly against wrong: he did not mince his words, and his warnings were not mealy-mouthed.

1156 *Mubin:* perspicuous. The reason why I have not used a simpler word, such as "plain" or "clear" is explained in n. 716 to 5:15. Al Mustafa's sermons were not polite reminders, with an eye to the flattery of weaknesses in high places or national vanities or crowd passions. They brought out every foible into the glare of light, by a fiery eloquence fed by inspiration from Allah *(Cf.* 38:70).

185. Do they see nothing in the government of the heavens and the earth and all that Allah hath created?(1157) (Do they not see) that it may well be that their terms is nigh drawing to an end? In what message after this will they then believe?

1157 An appeal to Allah's most wonderful universe should at once convince a thinking mind of man's nothingness, and Allah's power, glory, and goodness. Man's term here is fleeting. If he is not warned by the great Signs, and the Messages which call his attention to them, is he capable of any faith at all?

186. To such as Allah rejects from His guidance, there can be no guide: He will leave them in their trespasses, wandering in distraction.(1158)

1158 *Cf.* 2:15 . If Allah's light is removed, the best of them can only wander hither and thither, like blind men, in distraction (see also 10:11).

187. They ask thee about the (final) Hour - when will be its appointed time? Say: "The knowledge thereof is with my Lord (alone): None but He can reveal as to when it will occur.(1159) Heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth. Only, all of a sudden will it come to you." They ask thee as if thou Wert eager in search thereof:(1160) Say: "The knowledge thereof is with Allah (alone), but most men know not."

1159 The fact of its coming is a certainty: the exact time appointed for it is not revealed by Allah. If it were it would be so momentous as to disturb our thoughts and life. It would be a heavy burden to us. Our duty is to be prepared for it at all times. It will come when we least expect it. In the present Gospels, Jesus says the same thing: he does not know the Hour, but it will come suddenly. "But of that day and that Hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." (Mark. 13:32-33), *(Cf.* 33:63).

1160 *Hafiyy* is usually construed to mean: "eagerly or anxiously in search of: the preposition following here is *'an* = concerning, about. Some commentators (including al Raghib al Asfahani) understand it in this passage to mean "well-acquainted." In 19:47 , with the preposition b *i* following it, it signifies "well-disposed to", "favourable to, good to, kind to."

188. Say: "I have no power over any good or harm to myself except as Allah willeth. If I had knowledge of the unseen, I should have multiplied all good, and no evil should have touched me: I am but a warner, and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have faith."(1161)

1161 A warner to all, and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have faith, because they will profit by the glad tidings. As everyone is invited to faith, the glad tidings are *offered* to all, but they are not necessarily accepted by all.

189. It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature,(1162) in order that he might dwell with her (in love). When they are united, she bears a light burden and carries it about (unnoticed). When she grows heavy, they both pray(1163) to Allah their Lord, (saying): "If Thou givest us a goodly child,(1164) we vow we shall (ever) be grateful."

1162 *Cf.* 4:1. and n. 504, where the construction is explained, (see also 16:72).

1163 The mystery of the physical birth of man, as it affects the father and the mother, only touches the imagination of the parents in the later stages when the child is yet unborn and yet the life stirs within the body of the expectant mother. The coming of the new life is a solemn thing, and is fraught with much hope as well as much unknown risk to the mother herself. The parents in their anxiety turn to Allah. If this feeling of solemnity, hope, and looking towards Allah were maintained after birth, all would be well for the parents as well as for the rising generation. But the attitude changes, as the verses following show.

1164 *Goodly: salih:* includes the following ideas: sound in body and mind; healthy; righteous: of good moral disposition.

190. But when He giveth them a goodly child, they ascribe to others a share in the gift they have received: but Allah is exalted high above the partners they ascribe(1165) to Him.

1165 When the child is born, the parents forget that it is a precious gift of Allah- a miracle of Creation, which should lift their minds up to the higher things of Allah. Instead, their gradual familiarity with the new life makes them connect it with many superstitious ideas or rites and ceremonies, or they take it as a matter of course, as a little plaything of the material world. This leads to idolatry or false worship, or the setting up of false standards, in derogation of the dignity of Allah.

191. Do they indeed ascribe to Him as partners things that can create nothing, but are themselves created?

192. No aid can they give them, nor can they aid themselves!

193. If ye call them to guidance, they will not obey: For you it is the same whether ye call them or ye hold your peace!(1166)

1166 When false worship takes root, the teacher of Truth finds much to discourage him. As far as he is concerned, it seems as if he has produced no effect. Yet his duty is to continue his work, in the spirit of verse 199 below,

forgiving all opposition, teaching what is right, and not joining the ignorant in their attitude of doubt and indecision.

194. Verily those whom ye call upon besides Allah are servants like unto you:(1167) Call upon them, and let them listen to your prayer, if ye are (indeed) truthful!

1167 False gods, whether idols or deified men, or ideas and superstitions , have no existence of their own, independent of Allah's creation. They are Allah's creatures, and like servants are subject to His authority. Deified men are not real men, but false ideas of men. They cannot help themselves: how can they help others?

195. Have they feet to walk with? Or hands to lay hold with? Or eyes to see with? Or ears to hear with? Say: "Call your ´god-partners´,(1168) scheme (your worst) against me, and give me no respite!

1168 Here is a test and a challenge. If the false gods had any power or even existence, collect them all together, and, says the Prophet of Allah, "Let them do their worst against me." They cannot; because the whole thing is based on a superstition and a chimaera, *(Cf.* 11:55).

196. "For my Protector is Allah, Who revealed the Book (from time to time), and He will choose and befriend the righteous.

197. "But those ye call upon besides Him, are unable to help you, and indeed to help themselves."

198. If thou callest them to guidance, they hear not. Thou wilt see them looking at thee, but they see not.(1169)

1169 The beauty and righteousness of al Mustafa's life were acknowledged on all hands, until he received the mission to preach and to fight against evil. What happened then? Evil erected barricades for itself. It had eyes, but it refused to see. It had ears, but it refused to hear. It had intelligence, but it blocked up its channels of understanding. Even now, after fourteen centuries, a life of unexampled purity, probity, justice, and righteousness is seen in false lights by blind detractors!

199. Hold to forgiveness; command what is right; But turn away from the ignorant.(1170)

1170 Allah comforts the Prophet and directs his mind to three precepts: (1) to forgive injuries, insults, and persecution; (2) to continue to declare the faith that was in him, and not only to declare it, but to act up to it in all his dealings with friends and foes: (3) to pay no attention to ignorant fools, who raised doubts or difficulties, hurled taunts or reproaches, or devised plots to defeat the truth: they were to be ignored and passed by, not to be engaged in fights and fruitless controversies, or conciliated by compromises.

200. If a suggestion from Satan assail thy (mind),(1171) seek refuge with Allah. for He heareth and knoweth (all things).

1171 Even a Prophet of Allah is but human. He might think that revenge or retaliation, or a little tactful silence when evil stalks abroad, or some compromise with ignorance, might be best for the cause. He is to reject such suggestions.

201. Those who fear Allah, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allah to remembrance, when lo! they see (aright)!(1172)

1172 Allah protects His own, as no one else can. He is the sure refuge-and the only one-for men of faith. If we are confused or angry, being blinded by this world, He will open our eyes.

202. But their brethren (the evil ones)(1173) plunge them deeper into error, and never relax (their efforts).

1173 We go back to consider the ungodly, whom we left at verse 198, in order to be taught our behaviour towards evil. The forces of evil never relax their efforts to draw their "brethren" (those who go into their family) deeper and deeper into the mire of sin and destruction.

203. If thou bring them not a revelation,(1174) they say: "Why hast thou not got it together?" Say: "I but follow what is revealed to me from my Lord: this is (nothing but) lights from your Lord,(1175) and Guidance, and mercy, for any who have faith."

1174 "Ayah" here, I think, means specially an Ayah of the Holy Qur'an. The infidels did not believe in revelation, and used to taunt the Holy Prophet, as much as to say that he used to put together words and promulgate them as revelation. The answer is contained in the sentence that follows. No human composition could contain the beauty, power, and spiritual insight of the Qur'an. Without inspiration it is impossible to suppose that a man, with or without literary and philosophic training could produce such a book as the Qur'an.

1175 *"Lights":* eyes, faculty of spiritual insight. The revelation is for us (1) spiritual eyes, (2) guidance, and (3) mercy. (1) is the highest in degree: just as a blind man, if he is given eyes and the faculty of sight, is at once removed into an entirely new world, so those who can reach the stage of spiritual insight pass into and become citizens of a wholly new spiritual World. (2) is next in degree: the man of the world can act up to the teaching about right conduct and prepare for the Hereafter. (3) is the Mercy of Allah, free to every one, saint and sinner, who sincerely believes and puts his trust in Allah.

204. When the Qur´an is read, listen to it with attention, and hold your peace: that ye may receive Mercy.

205. And do thou (O reader!) Bring thy Lord to remembrance in thy (very) soul, with humility and in reverence, without loudness in words, in the mornings and evenings; and be not thou of those who are unheedful.

206. Those who are near(1176) to thy Lord, disdain not to do Him worship: They celebrate His praises, and bow down before Him.(1177)

1176 The higher you are in spiritual attainment, the more is your desire and your opportunity to seive and worship your Lord and Cherisher and the Lord and Cherisher of all the worlds; and the greater is your pride in that service and that worship.

1177 At this stage a *Sajdah* or prostration is indicated, as symbolical of our humble acceptance of the privilege of serving and worshipping Allah— a fitting close to a Surah in which we are led, through a contemplation of the stories of the Messengers of Allah, to the meaning of revelation and its relation to our moral and spiritual progress.

8. Al Anfal (The Spoils of War)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. They ask thee(1178) concerning (things taken as) spoils of war. Say: "(such) spoils are at the disposal of Allah(1179) and the Messenger. So fear Allah, and keep straight the relations between yourselves: Obey Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe."

1178 The occasion was the question of the division of the booty after the battle of Badr. See Introduction to this Surah.

1179 Booty taken in a lawful and just war does not belong to any individual. If he fought for such accessory rewards, he fought from wrong motives. It belongs to the Cause, in this case the Cause of Allah, as administered by His Messenger. Any portion given out to individuals are accessory gifts, windfalls from the bounty of the Commander. The chief thing is to remain staunch to the Cause of Allah, and have no differences among those who stand for the Cause. Our internal relations must be kept straight: they must not be disturbed by cupidity or worldly considerations of gain, for any windfalls of this kind should be outside our calculations.

2. For, Believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened, and put (all) their trust in their Lord;

3. Who establish regular prayers and spend (freely) out of the gifts We have given them for sustenance:(1180)

1180 *Sustenance:* again in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. The object is to warn off from the love of booty and worldly wealth. Why do we want these? To all true Believers Allah gives generous sustenance in any case, in both senses, but especially in the spiritual sense, for it is coupled with forgiveness and grades of dignity before Allah, in the next verse.

4. Such in truth are the believers: they have grades of dignity with their Lord, and forgiveness, and generous sustenance:

5. Just as(1181) thy Lord ordered thee out of thy house in truth, even though a party among the Believers disliked it,

1181 *Just as* ; the comparison takes us back to the first clause in verse 4: "such in truth are the Believers "-jusr as thy Lord also is just and true in ordering thee out to fight against heavy odds, when the alternative was to fight against the unarmed caravan which would have given thee abundant booty almost without a fight. To appreciate the full meaning, remember that the word *haqq,* translated "truth" means also "right," ' *j* ust", "what is becoming." The true Believers believe in truth and do right in obedience to Allah's command. So Allah also, in asking them to fight against odds, is not asking them to rush to destruction, but is providing them with an opportunity of vindicating the truth in scorn of worldly advantage. And He made good His promise by giving them victory.

6. Disputing with thee concerning the truth after it was made manifest, as if they were being driven to death and they (actually) saw it.(1182)

1182 In verse 6 we have again the word "truth": some of the Believers disputed concerning "the truth": they did not feel sure that the course recommended was the true and right course. They thought it would be certain destruction: they saw death almost staring them in the face, *(Cf.* 6:57).

7. Behold! Allah promised you one of the two (enemy) parties,(1183) that it should be yours: Ye wished that the one unarmed should be yours, but Allah willed to justify the Truth according to His words and to cut off the roots of the Unbelievers;-

1183 Just before Badr there were two alternatives before the Muslims in Madinah, to save themselves from being overwhelmed by the Makkan Quraysh with all their resources from the rich Syrian trade. One, which had least danger for the time being, and also promised much booty, was to fall upon the Quraysh caravan returning from Syria to Makkah richly laden, and led by Abu Sufyan with only 40 men unarmed. From a wordly point of view this was the safest and most lucrative course. The other alternative, which was actually adopted on the recommendation of the Prophet by the guidance of Allah, was to leave the booty alone and march out boldly against the well-armed and well-equipped Quray sh anny of 1,000 men coming from Makkah. The Muslims had no more than 300 men, ill-armed, to oppose the force. But if they could defeat it, it would shake the selfish autocracy which was in possession of Makkah. By Allah's help they won a splendid victory, and the standard of Truth was established, never to be lowered again.

8. That He might justify Truth and prove Falsehood false, distasteful though it be to those in guilt.

9. Remember ye implored the assistance of your Lord, and He answered you: "I will assist you with a thousand of the angels, ranks on ranks."(1184)

1184 *Cf.* 3:123, 125, 126. The number of angels, a thousand at Badr and three thousand and five thousand at Uhud, is probably not to be taken literally, but to express a strength at least equal to the strength of the enemy.

10. Allah made it but a message of hope, and an assurance to your hearts: (in any case)(1185) there is no help except from Allah. and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

1185 All help comes ultimately from Allah. In special cases it may take special forms to put heart into us, and to fit in with our feelings and our psychology.

11. Remember He covered you with a sort of drowsiness,(1186) to give you calm as from Himself, and he caused rain to descend on you(1187) from heaven, to clean you therewith, to remove from you the stain of Satan,(1188) to strengthen your hearts, and to plant your feet firmly therewith.

1186 *Cf.* 3:154 for Uhud. Calm (presence of mind) is essential in battle and in all posts of danger. If the mind is too much in a state of excitement, it cannot carry out a well-considered or well-concerned plan. This spirit of calm confidence on the part of the Muslims won against the blustering violence of the Quray sh .

1187 The rain was welcome for many reasons. (1) Water was scarce both for drinking and ablutions; (2) the Muslim band, without baggage or equipment or comforts, found that their thirst aggravated their fatigue; (3) the sand was loose, and the rain consolidated it and enabled them "to plant their feet firmly."

1188 *"Stain of Satan":* both literally and figuratively. Dirt is physically a symbol of evil, and the Muslims were particular about ablutions before prayer. But the rain also refreshed their spirits and removed any lurking doubts in their minds (suggestions of the Evil One) that victory might be impossible in such adverse circumstances.

12. Remember thy Lord inspired the angels (with the message): "I am with you: give firmness to the Believers: I will instil terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers: smite ye above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them."(1189)

1189 The vulnerable parts of an armed man are above the neck. A blow on the neck, face, or head, finishes him off. If he has armour it is difficult to get at his heart. But if his hands are put out of action, he is unable to wield his sword or lance or other weapon, and easily becomes a prisoner.

13. This because they contended against Allah and His Messenger. If any contend against Allah and His Messenger, Allah is strict in punishment.

14. Thus (will it be said): "Taste ye then of the (punishment): for those who resist Allah, is the penalty of the Fire."

15. O ye who believe! when ye meet the Unbelievers in hostile array,(1190) never turn your backs to them.

1190 The laws of spiritual fight are exactly similar to those enforced by military virtue and discipline. Meet your enemy fairly and squarely, not rashly, but after due preparation. *Zahfan* in the text *(meeting in hostile array)* implies a slow and well-planned proceeding towards a hostile army. When once in combat, carry it through: there is no room for second thoughts. Death or victory should be the motto of every soldier: it may be death for himself individually, but if he has faith, there is triumph in either case for his cause. Two exceptions are recognised: (1) *reculer pour mieux sauter,* to go back in order to jump forward; or to deceive the enemy by a feint; (2) if an individual or body is, by the chances of battle, isolated from his own force, he can fall back on his force in order to fight the battle. There is no virtue in mere single-handedness. Each individual must use his life and his resources to the best advantage for the common cause.

16. If any do turn his back to them on such a day - unless it be in a stratagem of war, or to retreat to a troop (of his own)- he draws on himself the wrath of Allah, and his abode is Hell,- an evil refuge (indeed)!

17. It is not ye who slew them; it was Allah. when thou threwest (a handful(1191) of dust), it was not thy act, but Allah's: in order that He might test the Believers by a gracious trial(1192) from Himself: for Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things).

1191 When the battle began, the Prophet prayed, and threw a handful of dust or sand at the enemy, which, as described in Traditions, struck the eyes of the enemy. This had a great psychological effect. Every act in the battle is ascribed to Allah, as it was in His cause and it was not undertaken except by His command. (R).

1192 Numerically the odds against the Muslims were three to one. In other ways they were at a disadvantage: of arms and equipment they had but little, while the enemy were well-found; they were inexperienced, while the Quraysh had brought their foremost warriors. In all this there was a test, but the test was accompanied by gracious favours of countless value: their Commander was one in whom they had perfect faith, and for whom they were ready to lay down their lives; the rain refreshed them; their spirit was unshaken; and they were fighting in Allah's cause. Thus the trial or test became itself a blessing.

18. That, and also because Allah is He Who makes feeble the plans and stratagem of the Unbelievers.

19. (O Unbelievers!) if ye prayed for victory and judgment,(1193) now hath the judgment come to you: if ye desist (from wrong), it will be best for you: if ye return (to the attack), so shall We. Not the least good will your forces be to you even if they were multiplied: for verily Allah is with those who believe!

1193 *Path* = victory, decision, judgement. The Quraysh in Makkah had prayed for victory; they were confident that their superior numbers, equipment, and experience would be decisive. With a play on the word, they are told that the decision had come, and the victory-but not in the sense they had hoped for!

20. O ye who believe! Obey Allah and His Messenger, and turn not away from him when ye hear (him speak).

21. Nor be like those who say, "We hear," but listen not:(1194)

1194 *Cf.* 2:93.

22. For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the deaf and the dumb,-(1195) those who understand not.

1195 *Cf.* 2:18 and 8:55 .

23. If Allah had found in them any good. He would indeed have made them listen: (As it is), if He had made them listen, they would but have turned back and declined (Faith).

24. O ye who believe! give your response to Allah and His Messenger, when He calleth you to that which will give you life;(1196) and know that Allah cometh in between a man(1197) and his heart, and that it is He to Whom ye shall (all) be gathered.

1196 There are two points to note. (1) Note that after Allah and His Messenger are mentioned, the pronoun and verb in the next clause are singular: everything that Allah's Messenger put forward as an injunction came bv inspiration from Allah: the Messenger made his will coincide completely with Allah's will. (2) We are asked actively to give our response in deed and life to the call of duty and conscience, for that call leads to real life, the life eternal, even though it may apparently mean in this world the loss of things that make life dear or the loss of life itself. If we refer this J ihad, *i.e.,* fighting in and for the Cause, both literally and metaphorically, the meaning becomes quite clear.

1197 If the human heart is refractory and refuses to obey the call of Allah, that is not the end of the matter. Allah has to be reckoned with. The refusal may be because there was some pet human scheme which the heart of man was not willing to give up for Allah's Cause. Will that scheme come to fruition by refusing to serve the higher Cause? By no means. Man proposes, but God disposes. If the scheme or motive was perfectly secret from men, it was not secret from Allah. The heart is the innermost seat of man's affections and desires; but Allah intervenes between man and his heart. (R).

25. And fear tumult or oppression,(1198) which affecteth not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong: and know that Allah is strict in punishment.

1198 *Fitnah* has many meanings: (1) the root meaning is trial or temptation, as in 2:102 and 8:28; (2) an analogous meaning is trial or punishment, as in 6:74; (3) tumult or oppression, as in 2:193; and here; and in 8:39; (4) there is here (8:25) the further shade of meaning suggested, discord, sedition, civil war.

This warning against internal discord or tumult was very necessary in the Civil Wars of early Islam, and was never more necessary than it is now, for it affects innocent and guilty alike, (see also 9:94).

26. Call to mind when ye were a small (band), despised through the land, and afraid that men might despoil and kidnap you;(1199) But He provided a safe asylum for you, strengthened you with His aid, and gave you Good things for sustenance: that ye might be grateful.

1199 On the immediate occasion the Muslims were reminded that they were a small band in Makkah; despised and rejected; living in a state of insecurity for their persons, their lives, their property, and those of their dependents; persecuted and exiled and how by the grace of Allah they found a safe asylum in Madinah, how they found friends and helpers, how their many needs were cared for, and how at length they gathered strength and numbers enough to defeat the forces of godlessness, injustice, and oppression.

But for every individual, in some form or other, the lesson applies. His spiritual life begins humbly; he is despised and laughed at, perhaps persecuted and shut out from ordinary privileges open to all; but Allah gives him strength; friends spring up for him; and he is sustained until his highest spiritual desires are gradually fulfilled.

27. O ye that believe! betray not the trust of Allah and the Messenger, nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you.(1200)

1200 Trusts maybe of various kinds: (1) property, goods, credit, etc.; (2) plans, confidences, secrets, etc.; (3) knowledge, talents, opportunities, etc., which we are expected to use for our fellow men. Men may betray the trust of Allah and His Prophet by misusing property, or abusing the confidence reposed in them, or the knowledge or talents given to them. On that special occasion, when the plans for the protection of Allah's worshippers against annihilation were of special importance, the Prophet's trust and confidence had to be guarded with special care. Occasions for scrupulously respecting the trust and confidence of our fellow men occur every day in our life, and few of us can claim perfection in this respect. Hence the special distinction of the Prophet of Allah, who earned the title of *AlAmin,* the one who was true to every trust reposed in him.

28. And know ye that your possessions and your progeny are but a trial;(1201) and that it is Allah with Whom lies your highest reward.

1201 A big family-many sons-was considered a source of power and strength: 3:10 , 116. So in English, a man with many children is said to have his "quiver full;" *Cf.* Psalms, 127:4-5: "As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man, so are the children of thy youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be

ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate". So with property and possessions: they add to a man's dignity, power, and influence. But both possessions and a large family are a temptation and a trial. They may turn out to be a source of spiritual downfall, if they are mishandled, or if the love of them excludes the love of Allah.

29. O ye who believe! if ye fear Allah, He will grant you a Criterion(1202) (to judge between right and wrong), remove from you (all) evil (that may afflict) you, and forgive you: for Allah is the Lord of grace unbounded.

1202 *Cf.* 2:53 and 2:185. The battle of Badr is called the *Furqan* in Muslim theology, because it was he first trial of strength by battle, in Islam, between the powers of good and evil. Evil was defeated, and hose who had real faith were tested and sorted out from those who had not faith enough to follow the banner of Faith. See also 8:41 and n. 1210.

30. Remember how the Unbelievers plotted against thee, to keep thee in bonds, or slay thee, or get thee out (of thy home).(1203) They plot and plan, and Allah too plans; but the best of planners(1203-A) is Allah.

1203 The plots against Mustafa in Makkah aimed at three things. They were not only foiled, but Allah's underfill working turned the tables, and brought good out of evil in each case. (1) They tried to hold the Prophet in subjection in Makkah by putting pressure on his uncles, relatives, and friends. But the more they persecuted, the more the little Muslim community grew in faith and numbers. (2) They tried to injure or ay him. But the wonderful example of his humility, perseverance, and fearlessness furthered the cause of Islam. (3) They tried to get him and his followers out of their homes. But they found a new home in Madinah, from which they eventually reconquered not only Makkah, but Arabia and the world.

1203-A *Cf.* 3:54.

31. When Our Signs are rehearsed to them, they say: "We have heard this (before): if we wished, we could say (words) like these: these are nothing but tales of the ancients."(1204)

1204 *Cf.* 6:25 and n. 1434 to 10:42.

32. Remember how they said: "O Allah if this is indeed the Truth from Thee, rain down on us a shower of stones form the sky, or send us a grievous Penalty."(1205)

1205 This was actually a challenge thrown out by the Infidels in Makkah, not seriously but as a taunt. The answer is in the two following verses. Allah punishes in His own good rime, not according to the foolish and frivolous taunts of the unbelievers. While the Holy Prophet was with them, he-the Mercy for the Worlds-conferred a certain amount of immunity to them. There were also other Muslims, just men who asked for forgiveness. And Allah keeps the door of repentance and forgiveness open to all as long as they make it possible. But let them not be puffed up with pride, or think that they have lasting immunity. What became of Abu Jahl? He and some of his greatest warriors were slain at Badr. The little autocratic clique that prevented Muslims from access to the Sacred Mosque had their Nemesis not long afterwards. They pretended to be its guardians. But were they? Could they be? Only the righteous could be true guardians to Allah's places of worship, and particularly to the Central House of the Ka'bah. It was to be a place of pure worship, while their idolatrous worship was mere mummery-whistling and clapping of hands. All false worship advertises itself by noise and unseemly riot: it is said that the Pagans used to go naked round the Ka'bah.

33. But Allah was not going to send them a penalty whilst thou wast amongst them; nor was He going to send it whilst they could ask for pardon.

34. But what plea have they that Allah should not punish them, when they keep out (men) from the sacred Mosque - and they are not its guardians? No men can be its guardians except the righteous; but most of them do not understand.

35. Their prayer at the House (of Allah. is nothing but whistling and clapping of hands: (Its only answer can be), "Taste ye the penalty because ye blasphemed."

36. The Unbelievers spend their wealth to hinder (man) from the path of Allah, and so will they continue to spend; but in the end they will have (only) regrets and sighs; at length they will be overcome: and the Unbelievers will be gathered together to Hell;-

37. In order that Allah may separate(1206) the impure from the pure, put the impure, one on another, heap them together, and cast them into Hell. They will be the ones to have lost.

1206 It is only when matters are brought to an issue that evil is separated distinctly from the good. Then evil consorts with evil, and good with good. The evil will be piled into a heap. When the cup is full, the punishment will come. There will be no mistake about it The good should not be discouraged, because in fighting against them, all forces of evil join together and pool their resources together. The more they do so, the easier is the final arbitrament. It is all in Allah's Plan.

38. Say to the Unbelievers, if (now) they desist (from Unbelief), their past would be forgiven them; but if they persist, the punishment of those before them is already (a matter of warning for them).

39. And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah(1207) altogether and everywhere; but if they cease, verily Allah doth see all that they do.(1208)

1207 *Cf.* 2:193 and n. 207.

1208 If they cease from fighting and from the persecution of truth, Allah judges them by their actions and their motives, and would not wish that they should be harassed with further hostility. But if they refuse all terms, the righteous has nothing to fear: Allah will help and protect them.

40. If they refuse, be sure that Allah is your Protector - the best to protect and the best to help.

41. And know that out of all the booty that ye may acquire (in war), a fifth share is assigned(1209) to Allah,- and to the Messenger, and to near relatives, orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer,- if ye do believe in Allah and in the revelation We sent down to Our servant on the Day of Testing,-(1210) the Day of the meeting of the two forces. For Allah hath power over all things.(1211)

1209 The rule is that a fifth share is set apart for the Imam (the Commander) and the rest is divided among the forces. The fifth share reserved is expressed to be for Allah and the Prophet, and for charitable purposes for those to whom charity is due. Ultimately everything is at the disposal of Allah and His Prophet: 8:1: but four-fifths are divided, and only one-fifth is retained for the special purposes. The Imam has discretion as to the mode of division. In the Prophet's lifetime a certain portion was assigned to him and his near relatives.

1210 'Testing': *Furqan:* Criterion between right and wrong, decision between the forces of faith and unbelief. The battle of Badr is called by this name. See 8:29 and n. 1202.

1211 Allah's power is shown in the events detailed in the three verses following *(vv.* 42-44), leading to the complete victory of the Muslims over the pagan Quraysh.

42. Remember ye were on the hither side of the valley, and they on the farther side, and the caravan(1212) on lower ground than ye. Even if ye had made a mutual appointment to meet, ye would certainly have failed in the appointment:(1213) But (thus ye met), that Allah might accomplish a matter already enacted; that those who died might die after a clear Sign (had been given), and those who lived might live after a Clear Sign (had been given). And verily Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things).

1212 The little Islamic force from Madinah went out to meet the big Makkan army, and they met on the two sides of a valley at Badr, while the Quraysh caravan was on lower ground towards the sea, about 3 miles from Badr.

1213 They were all at cross purposes. The caravan was making for Makkah, but scarcely thought it could get there. The Quraysh force was trying to save the

caravan and then annihilate the Muslims. The Muslims had decided to let the caravan alone but attack the Quraysh army from Makkah, which they thought was going to be small, but which turned out to be big, more than three times their number. Yet the two forces met, precisely at the spot and at the time when a decisive battle should take place and the Muslims dispose of the pretensions of the Makkans. If they had carefully planned a mutual appointment, they could not have carried it out more precisely.

On the Muslim side the few martyrs knew that the victory was theirs and those who survived the battle enjoyed the fruits of the victory. On the pagan side, both those who died and those who lived knew fully the issue joined. Even psychologically both sides went in with full determination to decide the issue.

43. Remember in thy dream Allah showed them to thee as few: if He had shown them to thee as many, ye would surely have been discouraged, and ye would surely have disputed in (your) decision; but Allah saved (you): for He knoweth well the (secrets) of (all) hearts.

44. And remember when ye met, He showed them to you as few in your eyes, and He made you appear as contemptible in their eyes:(1214) that Allah might accomplish a matter already enacted. For to Allah do all questions go back (for decision).

<u>1214</u> The Muslim army, though they knew their worldly disadvantage, did not realise the full odds against them, The Makkans came exulting in any case, and they despised the contemptible little force opposed to them. Even though they thought the Muslim force was twice as great as it was (3:13), still that number was contemptible, when taken with its poor equipment. Both these psychological mistakes subserved the Plan, which was to bring the matter to a decisive issue, whether the Pagans of Makkah were to continue their arrogant oppression, or the religion of Allah was to be established in freedom and honour.

45. O ye who believe! When ye meet a force, be firm, and call Allah in remembrance much (and often); that ye may prosper:

46. And obey Allah and His Messenger. and fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart; and be patient and persevering: For Allah is with those who patiently persevere:(1215)

<u>1215</u> A fine description of the Muslim virtues which make for success and whose loss brings about humiliation and failure. *"Power* literally, "wind"-the favourable wind for a sailing ship.

47. And be not like those who started from their homes insolently and to be seen of men, and to hinder (men) from the path of Allah.(1216) For Allah compasseth round about all that they do.

<u>1216</u> A true description of the Makkan army which met its doom.

48. Remember Satan made their (sinful) acts seem alluring to them, and said: "No one among men can overcome you this day, while I am near to you": But when the two forces came in sight of each other, he turned on his heels, and said: "Lo! I am clear of you; lo! I see what ye see not; Lo! I fear Allah. for Allah is strict in punishment."(1217)

<u>1217</u> It is the way with the leaders of evil, when they find their cause lost, that they wash their hands of their followers and leave them in the lurch. They sec more clearly then their dupes. They are not simpletons: they know the consequences of the wrath of Allah. Satan's "fear" of Allah is terror combined with hatred - the very opposite of the feeling which is described in *Taqwa, viz.,* the desire to avoid doing anything against Allah's will, such desire being founded on trust in Allah and the love of Allah.

49. Lo! the hypocrites say, and those in whose hearts is a disease:(1218) "These people,- their religion has misled them." But if any trust in Allah, behold! Allah is Exalted in might, Wise.

<u>1218</u> *Cf.* 2:10 , for "disease in the heart."

Trust in Allah brings its own reward: our eyes are opened, and we see how great, good, and wise is the Cherisher of the Worlds. Others may sneer and despise. But the blessing of Allah keeps our minds fresh and our hearts contented.

50. If thou couldst see, when the angels take the souls of the Unbelievers (at death),(1219) (How) they smite their faces and their backs, (saying): "Taste the penalty of the blazing Fire-

<u>1219</u> In contrast to the taunt against those who trust in Allah, "that their religion has misled them," is shown the terrible punishment, after death, of those who laughed at Faith.

51. "Because of (the deeds) which(1220) your (own) hands sent forth; for Allah is never unjust to His servants:

<u>1220</u> The punishment is shown to be due to their own deeds of wrong, because Allah is never unjust in the least to His servants.

52. "(Deeds) after the manner of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them: They rejected the Signs of Allah, and Allah punished them for their crimes: for Allah is Strong, and Strict in punishment:

53. "Because Allah will never change(1221) the grace which He hath bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls: and verily Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things)."

<u>1221</u> Allah bestows His grace freely, but He never withdraws it arbitrarily. Before He changes their state and circumstances, an actual state of rebellion and contumacy has arisen in their own souls, which brings about its inevitable punishment.

54. (Deeds) after the manner of the people of Pharaoh and those before them":(1222) They treated as false the Signs of their Lord: so We destroyed them for their crimes, and We drowned the people of Pharaoh: for they were all oppressors and wrong- doers.

<u>1222</u> These words from the address of the angels are quoted again, in order to add the comment that follows. Note that in verse 52, the words were that they *rejected* the Signs of Allah and were *punished:* here the words are that they treated the Signs as false and were *destroyed-* a higher degree of guilt deserved a severer punishment.

55. For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah(1223) are those who reject Him: They will not believe.

<u>1223</u> In 8:22 we were warned against "the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah", who do not make use of their faculties of hearing, speaking and understanding, in the service of Allah, and in fact misuse their faculties to blaspheme Allah. The same brute creatures are shown here in another light: they are faithless both to Allah and man.

56. They are those with whom thou didst make a covenant,(1224) but they break their covenant every time, and they have not the fear (of Allah..

<u>1224</u> The immediate occasion was the repeated treachery of the Banu Qurayzah after their treaties with the Muslims. But the general lesson remains, as noted in the two following verses. Treachery in war is doubly wrong, for it endangers so many lives. Such treachery should be punished in such a way that it gets no chance again. Not only the actual perpetrators but those who follow their standard should be rendered powerless. And the broken treaty should be denounced so that the innocent party can at least fight on equal terms. From actual physical warfare we can carry the same lesson to spiritual warfare. A truce or understanding is possible with those who respect definite principles, not with those who have no principles and are merely out for oppression and wickedness.

57. If ye gain the mastery over them in war, disperse, with them, those who follow them, that they may remember.(1224-A)

<u>1224-A</u> The purpose of the verse is to urge Muslims to act against their enemies described above with a severity and resoluteness which would serve as a deterrent to other enemies of Islam who might be inclined to follow their example and act treacherously towards Muslims. (Eds.)-

58. If thou fearest treachery from any group, throw back (their covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms: for Allah loveth not the treacherous.

59. Let not the unbelievers think that they can get the better (of the godly): they will never frustrate (them).

60. Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including(1225) steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom(1226) Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly.(1227)

1225 The immediate occasion of this injunction was the weakness of cavalry and appointments of war in the early fights of Islam. But the general meaning follows. In every fight, physical, moral, or spiritual, arm yourself with the best weapons and the best arms against your enemy, so as to instil wholesome respect into him for you and the Cause you stand for.

1226 There are always lurking enemies whom you may not know, but whom Allah knows. It is your duty to be ready against all, for the sacred Cause under whose banner you are fighting.

1227 Be always ready and put all your resources into your Cause. You do not do so in vain. Allah's reward will come in various forms. He knows all, and His reward will always be more generous than you can possibly deserve.

61. But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah. for He is One that heareth and knoweth (All things).(1228)

1228 While we must always be ready for the good fight lest it be forced on us, even in the midst of the fight we must always be ready for peace if there is any inclination towards peace on the other side. There is no merit merely in a fight by itself. It should be a joyful duty not for itself, but to establish the reign of peace and righteousness and Allah's Law.

62. Should they intend to deceive thee,- verily Allah sufficeth thee: He it is That hath strengthened thee with His aid and with (the company of) the Believers;(1229)

1229 In working for peace there may be certain risk of treachery on the other side. We must take that risk; because the men of Faith have Allah's aid to count upon and the strength of the united body of the righteous. (R).

63. And (moreover) He hath put affection between their hearts: not if thou hadst spent all that is in the earth, couldst thou have produced that affection, but Allah hath done it: for He is Exalted in might, Wise.(1230)

1230 On the immediate occasion, the greatest miracle and most wonderful working of Allah's grace was the union of hearts produced among the jarring, war-like, excitable elements of Arabia under the gentle, firm, and wise guidance of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah. At all times we must pray to Allah for this gift above all—union, understanding, and pure and sincere affection among those who take Allah's name. With it there is strength and success. Without it there is humiliation, slavery, and moral degradation. There may be many causes of difference and dispute. The reconciliation can only come from the glory and wisdom of Allah.

64. O Messenger. sufficient unto thee is Allah,- (unto thee) and unto those who follow thee among the Believers.(1231)

1231 *The Believers:* mere Up-profession of belief, or even the kind of belief that does not result in action, is not enough. To those whose belief is so sincere that it results in complete trust in Allah and in fearless action in His service, the consequences on this earth do not matter. Allah's good pleasure is enough for them.

65. O Messenger. rouse the Believers to the fight. If there are twenty amongst you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred: if a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand of the Unbelievers: for these are a people without understanding.(1232)

1232 In a fight, odds of ten-to-one against anyone are appalling. But they do not daunt the men of faith. Whether they personally win or die, their Cause prevails. They are sure to win: because (1) they have divine aid, and (2) even humanly speaking, those who take up arms against truth and righteousness are fools, and their seeming power is but a broken reed.

66. For the present, Allah hath lightened your (task), for He knoweth that there is a weak spot in you:(1233) But (even so), if there are a hundred of you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred, and if a thousand, they will vanquish two thousand, with the leave of Allah. for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.

1233 Given equal conditions, Muslims on account of their faith could win against odds of ten-to-one. But where their organisation and equipment are weak, as was the case about the time of Badr, they were set a lighter task, and asked to tackle no more than odds of two to one against them. As a matter of fact at Badr they won through against odds of more than three to one.

67. It is not fitting for a messenger that he should have prisoners of war until he hath thoroughly subdued(1234) the land. Ye look for the temporal goods of this world; but Allah looketh to the Hereafter: And Allah is Exalted in might, Wise.

1234 An ordinary war may be for territory or trade, revenge or military glory— all "temporal goods of this world." Such a war is condemned. But a Jihad is fought under strict conditions laid down by Islam, and solely for the cause of Allah. All baser motives, therefore are strictly excluded. The greed of gain in the shape of ransom from captives has no place in such warfare. (R).

At the same time, if there has been heavy loss of life already, captives may be taken, and it would be for the Imam to exercise his discretion as to the time when it was safe to release them, and whether the release should be free or on parole or on a fine by way of punishment. Destruction and slaughter, however repugnant to a gentle soul like that of Muhammad, were inevitable where evil tried to suppress the good. Even Jesus, whose mission was more limited, had to say: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword." (Matt. 10:34), *(Cf.* 47:4).

Seventy captives were taken at Badr, and it was decided to take ransom for them. While the general principle of fighting for the purpose of taking captives in order to get their ransom is condemned, the particular action in this case was approved in *vv.* 68-71.

68. Had it not been for a previous ordainment(1235) from Allah, a severe penalty would have reached you for the (ransom) that ye took.

1235 Though any motive of worldly gain, which may have been in the minds of some among the victorious Muslim army, is condemned as worthy of a severe penalty, what actually happened is ascribed to the Plan of Allah, which was pre-ordained. Among the prisoners taken were the Prophet's uncle al'Abbas and 'Ali's brother Aqil, who afterwards became Muslims. Al 'Abbas was an ancestor of the founder of the celebrated 'Abbasi Dynasty which played such a notable part in Islamic history. In his case the promise made in verse 70 was amply fulfilled. In the case of all prisoners, if there was any good in their hearts, their very fight against Islam and their capture led to their being blessed with Islam. Thus does Allah's Plan work in a marvellous way, and evolve good out of seeming evil.

69. But (now) enjoy(1236) what ye took in war, lawful and good: but fear Allah. for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

1236 *Enjoy,* literally, *eat.* See 7:19 , n. 1004, and 5:66, n. 776.

70. O Messenger. say to those who are captives in your hands: "If Allah findeth any good(1237) in your hearts, He will give you something better than what has been taken from you, and He will forgive you: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful."

1237 This is a consolation to the prisoners of war. In spite of their previous hostility, Allah will forgive them in His mercy if there was any good in their hearts, and confer upon them a far higher gift than anything they have ever lost. This gift in its highest sense would be the blessing of Islam, but even in a material sense,

there was great good fortune awaiting them, *e.g.,* in the case of al 'Abbas, (see n. 1235).

Note how comprehensive is Allah's care. He encourages and strengthens the Muslims, at the same time condemning any baser motives that may have entered their minds. He consoles the prisoners of war and promises them better things if there is any good in them at all. And He offers comfort to those who have left their homes in His Cause, and knits them into closer fellowship with those who have helped them and sympathised with them.

71. But if they have treacherous designs against thee, (O Messenger.), they have already been in treason against Allah,(1238) and so hath He given (thee) power over them. And Allah so He Who hath (full) knowledge and wisdom.

1238 If the kindness shown to them is abused by the prisoners of war when they are released, it is not a matter of discouragement to those who showed the kindness. Such persons have in their treachery shown already their treason to Allah, in that they took up arms against Allah's Prophet, and sought to blot out the pure worship of Allah. The punishment of defeat, which opened the eyes of some of their comrades, evidently did not open their eyes. But Allah knows all, and in His wisdom will order all things for the best. The Believers have done their duty in showing such clemency as they could in the circumstances of war. For them "Allah sufficeth" (8:62).

72. Those who believed, and adopted exile, and fought for the Faith, with their property and their persons, in the cause of Allah, as well as those who gave (them) asylum(1239) and aid,- these are (all) friends and protectors, one of another. As to those who believed but came not into exile,(1240) ye owe no duty of protection to them until they come into exile; but if they seek your aid in religion, it is your duty to help them, except against a people with whom ye have a treaty of mutual alliance.(1241) And (remember) Allah seeth all that ye do.

1239 The reference is to the *Muhajirin and Ansar,* the Emigrants and the Helpers, the people who forsook their homes and adopted voluntary exile from Makkan company with their beloved Leader, and their good friends in Madinah, who gave them asylum and every kind of assistance, moral and material. Under the magnetic personality of the Holy Prophet these two groups became like blood-brothers, and they were so treated in matters of inheritance during the period when they were cut off from their kith and kin.

1240 The Believers (Muslims) were entitled to all assistance in matters of religion. But if they were not strong enough to suffer voluntary exile on behalf of the Cause and make the personal sacrifices which their more ardent brethren in faith made, they could not reasonably ask for political or military assistance or protection.

1241 If a community suffers voluntary exile on account of persecution and oppression, and some of its weaker brethren stay behind, holding fast to faith but not prepared for the higher sacrifice, the exiles have still a duty to help their weaker brethren in matters of religion. The exiles, being at open war against the state which oppressed them, would be free to fight against such state. But if the weaker brethren are in a state in mutual alliance with the community, the community cannot in honour interfere with that state, whether it is Muslim or not. Presumably the alliance implies that the grievances of the weaker brethren will be redressed by the state itself. But it is not honourable to embarrass your own ally.

73. The Unbelievers are protectors, one of another: Unless ye do this, (protect each other), there would be tumult and oppression on earth, and great mischief.(1242)

1242 Evil consorts with evil. The good have all the more reason for drawing together and not. only living in mutual harmony, but being ready at all times to protect each other. Otherwise the world will be given over to aggressions by unscrupulous people, and the good will fail in their duty to establish Allah's Peace and to strengthen all the forces of truth and righteousness.

74. Those who believe, and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith, in the cause of Allah as well as those who give (them) asylum and aid,- these are (all) in very truth the Believers: for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous.(1243)

1243 Believers who make all sacrifices in the cause of Allah have given the best possible proof of their Faith by their actions. They have loved Allah much, and much will be forgiven them. What they sacrificed was, perhaps, judged by universal standards, of small value, but its value will be estimated by the precious love behind it, and its reward will be of no ordinary kind. It will not be a reward in the ordinary sense at all, for a reward is given once and for all. It will be a provision which lasts forever, and is on the most generous scale.

75. And those who accept Faith subsequently,(1244) and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith in your company,- they are of you. But kindred by blood have prior rights against each other in the Book of Allah.(1245) Verily Allah is well-acquainted with all things.

1244 Those who come into the fold last are none the less brethren in the fullest acceptation of the term. But any special provisions made in the special circumstances of the first martyrs for the Cause will not of course apply to them as the special circumstances which made them necessary have ceased to exist. See next note.

1245 *The Book of Allah, i.e.,* the Universal Plan, the Eternal Decree, the Preserved Tablet (85:22). Blood-relationship and its rights and duties do not depend on special circumstances of a temporary nature. Any temporary rights of mutual inheritance established between the early Emigrants and Helpers (n. 1239) would not apply to later recruits, who would come under entirely different circumstances.

9. Al Tawbah (The Repentance) or Bara'ah (The Disavowal)

1. A (declaration) of immunity(1246) from Allah and His Messenger, to those of the Pagans with whom ye have contracted mutual alliances:-

1246 *Bara 'ah:* usually translated "immunity". I do not think that word correctly represents the Arabic word in this context. The general sense is explained in the introduction to this Surah. In verse 3 below I use the periphrasis "dissolve treaty obligations," which goes some way to explain the meaning. The Pagans and enemies of Islam frequently made treaties of mutual alliances with the Muslims. The Muslims scrupulously observed their part, but the Pagans violated their part again and again when it suited them. After some years' experience it became imperative to denounce such treaties altogether. This was done in due form, with four months' notice, and a chance was given to those who faithfully observed their pledges, to continue their alliance. (R.).

2. Go ye, then, for four months,(1247) backwards and forwards, (as ye will), throughout the land, but know ye that ye cannot frustrate Allah (by your falsehood) but that Allah will cover with shame those who reject Him.

1247 *Four Months.* Some Commentators understand by this the four forbidden months in which warfare by ancient Arabian custom was unlawful, *viz.,* Rajab, Dhu al Qa'dah, Dhu al Hijjah, and Muharram: See 2:194 n. But it is better to take the signification of the four months immediately following the Declaration. Assuming that the Surah was promulgated early in Shawwal (see Introduction), the four months would be Shawwal. Dhu al 'Qa'dah, Dhu al Hijjah, and Muharram, of which the last three would also be the customary Prohibited Months.

3. And an announcement from Allah and His Messenger, to the people (assembled) on the day of the Great Pilgrimage,-(1248) that Allah and His Messenger dissolve (treaty) obligations with the Pagans. If then, ye repent, it were best for you; but if ye turn away, know ye that ye cannot frustrate Allah. And proclaim a grievous penalty to those who reject Faith.

1248 The great day of Hajj is either the 9th of Dhu al Hijjah, *('Arafah),or the* 10th (the Day of Sacrifice).

4. (But the treaties are) not dissolved(1249) with those Pagans with whom ye have entered into alliance and who have not subsequently failed you in aught, nor aided any one against you. So fulfil your engagements with them to the end of their term: for Allah loveth the righteous.

1249 The sacred duty of fulfilling all obligations of every kind, to Muslims and non Muslims, in public as well as private life, is a cardinal feature of Muslim ethics. The question of what is to be done with those who abuse this principle by failing in their duty but expect the Muslims to do their part is not to be solved (in the case of treaties) by a general denunciation of treaties but by a careful consideration of the cases where there has been fidelity and not treachery. There we are enjoined to give the strictest fidelity, as it is a part of righteousness and our duty to Allah.

5. But when the forbidden months(1250) are past, then fight and slay(1251) the Pagans wherever ye find them, an seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent,(1252) and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

1250 The emphasis is on the first clause: it is only when the four months of grace are past, and the other party shows no signs of desisting from its treacherous designs by right conduct, that the state of war supervenes - between Faith and Unfaith.

1251 When war becomes inevitable, it must be prosecuted with vigour. According to the English phrase, you cannot fight with kid gloves. The fighting may take the form of slaughter, or capture, or siege, or ambush and other stratagems. But even then there is room for repentance and amendment on the part of the guilty party, and if that takes place, our duty is forgiveness and the establishment of peace.

1252 The repentance must be sincere, and that is shown by conduct - a religious spirit of true prayer and charity. In that case we are not to bar the gate against the repentant. On the contrary we must do all we can to make their way easy, remembering that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

6. If one amongst the Pagans(1253) ask thee for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of Allah. and then escort him to where he can be secure.(1254) That is because they are men without knowledge.

1253 Even among the enemies of Islam, actively fighting against Islam, there may be individuals who may be in a position to require protection. Full asylum is to be given to them, and opportunities provided for hearing the Word of Allah. If they accept the Word, they become Muslims and brethren, and no further question arises. If they do not see their way to accept Islam, they will require double protection: (1) from the Islamic forces openly fighting against their people, and (2) from their own people, as they detached themselves from them. Both kinds of protection should be ensured for them, and they should be safely escorted to a place where they can be safe. Such persons only err through ignorance, and there may be much good in them.

1254 *Ma'manah:* place or opportunity of being secure from all harm.

7. How can there be a league, before Allah and His Messenger, with the Pagans, except those(1255) with whom ye made a treaty near the sacred Mosque? As long as these stand true to you, stand ye true to them: for Allah doth love the righteous.

1255 In this section we have the reasons why the treaties with treacherous Pagan foes were denounced. The clause introducing the exception is a parenthetical clause. The word "Pagans" must be connected with verse 8 which follows. In that verse the word *kayfa* resumes the clause introduced by the word *kayfa* at the beginning of verse 7. The exceptional Pagan tribes which remained true to their word were the Bariu Hamzah and the Banu Kinana, who swore their treaty near the Sacred Masque and faithfully observed it They were to be given the full benefit of their fidelity even though their kindred tribes were treacherous.

8. How (can there be such a league),(1256) seeing that if they get an advantage over you, they respect not in you the ties either of kinship(1257) or of covenant? With (fair words from) their mouths they entice you, but their hearts are averse from you; and most of them are rebellious and wicked.

1256 The exceptions having been stated parenthetically in verse 7, the indictment of the general mass of Pagan tribes is now set out briefly but fully and convincingly. After that kind of behaviour how can a treaty be possible with them? The counts are: (1) that whenever they got a slight advantage, they disregarded the ties both of kinship and of covenant as against the Muslims because of their Faith, thus proving doubly treacherous; (2) that they spoke fair words, but had venom in their hearts; (3) that their attitude was one of rebellion against their plighted word; (4) that they disregarded the solemn Signs of Allah for some miserable worldly gain; (5) that they tried to prevent other people from coming to the Way of Allah. The first clause is repeated again as the last clause, to emphasize their double treachery, and round off" the argument.

1257 Among the Arabs, the ties of kinship were so strong as to be almost unbreakable. The Pagan Arabs went out of their way to break them in the case of the Muslims, who were kith and kin to them. Besides the bond of kinship there was the further bond of their plighted oath in the Treaty. They broke that oath because the other parties were Muslims.

9. The Signs of Allah have they sold for a miserable price, and (many) have they hindered from His way: evil indeed are the deeds they have done.

10. In a Believer they respect not the ties either of kinship or of covenant! It is they who have transgressed all bounds.(1258)

1258 The catalogue of their sins being set out, it is clear that they were aggressors in the worst possible ways; and war became inevitable.

11. But (even so), if they repent,(1259) establish regular prayers, and practise regular charity,- they are your brethren in Faith: (thus) do We explain the Signs in detail, for those who understand.

1259 The chance of repentance and mercy to the worst enemies is again emphasised, in order that people with any understanding may not be misled into thinking that war was an easy or light matter. This emphasis is balanced by the emphasis in the next verse on the causes which made war inevitable for those with any self-respect

12. But if they violate their oaths after their covenant, and taunt you for your Faith,-(1260) fight ye the chiefs of Unfaith: for their oaths are nothing to them: that thus they may be restrained.

1260 Not only did the enemies break their oaths shamelessly, but they even taunted the Muslims on their Faith and the "simple-minded" way in which they continued to respect their part of the treaty, as if they were afraid to fight! *(Cf.* 2:124 and 36:12).

13. Will ye not fight people who violated their oaths, plotted to expel the Messenger,(1261) and took the aggressive by being the first (to assault) you? Do ye fear them? Nay, it is Allah Whom ye should more justly fear, if ye believe!

1261 The argument now takes a new turn. An appeal is made to the Muslims on various grounds: (1) the shameless disregard of treaties by the enemy, (2) the underhanded plots to discredit the Holy Prophet, and turn him out of Madinah as he had been turned out of Makkah, (3) the aggression taken by the Quraysh and their confederates in Madinah after the treaty to Hudaybiyah (A. H. 6, Dhu al Qa'dah, Feb. 628), (4) the manly attitude that fears Allah rather than men, and (5) the need to prove our sincere faith by test and trial and struggle and sacrifice (9:16).

14. Fight them, and Allah will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame, help you (to victory) over them, heal the breasts of Believers,(1262)

1262 *Heal the breasts of believers, i.e.,* of wounds that they may have sustained from the assaults, taunts, and cruelty of the enemy.

15. And still the indignation of their hearts.(1263) For Allah will turn (in mercy)(1264) to whom He will; and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

1263 When the victory comes and the wounds are healed, a great peace comes to the hearts of those who have suffered, striven, and struggled. The fighting was an abnormal necessity forced by injustice and oppression. When Allah's Law is established, the fire of indignation is quelled, and the true Peace of Islam is attained.

1264 Allah's mercy is unlimited. When evil is destroyed, many of those who were enticed by evil will come into the fold of truth and righteousness, and the cessation of war and conflict will bring peace, certainly to those who fought for the right, but also possibly to those whose eyes have been opened to the working of Allah's Law and who in healing reconciliation become members of the Brotherhood of Peace in Islam.

16. Or think ye that ye shall be abandoned, as though Allah did not know(1265) those among you who strive with might and main, and take none for friends and protectors except Allah, His Messenger, and the (community of) Believers? But Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.

1265 Some translators have taken a different verbal construction of this passage, but the ultimate effect in meaning is the same: we must all be tested and tried, but Allah knows our inmost hearts, and He will support those who strive in His way, out of sincere love for Him, His Prophet, and the body of the true men of faith.

17. It is not for such as join gods with Allah, to visit or maintain(1266) the mosques of Allah while they witness against their own souls to infidelity. The works of such bear no fruit: In Fire shall they dwell.

1266 *'Amara* as applied to mosques implies the following ideas: (1) to build or repair; (2) to maintain in fitting dignity; (3) to visit for purposes of devotion; and (4) fill with light and life and activity. For brevity I have only used the two words "visit and maintain" in the translation.

Before the preaching of Islam the Pagans built, repaired, and maintained the Mosque, and celebrated Pagan ceremonies in it, including naked circumambulation round the Ka'bah. They made an income out of it. Islam protested, and the Pagans ejected Muslims and their Leader from Makkah, and shut them out from the Ka'bah itself. When the Muslims were strong enough to retake Makkah (A. H. 8), they purified the Mosque and reestablished the worship of the true God. The families who previously held control could not after this be allowed in *a state of Paganism* to control the Mosque any longer. If they became Muslims, it was a different matter. The further question arose: should they be allowed to visit it and practise their unseemly Pagan rites? Obviously this would be derogatory to the dignity and honour of the Mosque, and was forbidden. This was the particular occasion to which the verse refers. The general deduction is clear. A house of Allah is a place of sincere devotion, not a theatre for vulgar rites nor a source of worldly income. Only sincere Believers have a right of entry. Who the sincere Believers are, is explained in the next verse.

18. The mosques of Allah shall be visited and maintained by such as believe in Allah and the Last Day, establish regular prayers, and practise regular charity, and fear none (at all) except Allah.(1267) It is they who are expected to be on true guidance.(1268)

1267 See the previous note. Sincere Believers are those who have faith in Allah and the future, and have a spirit of devotion and charity-a true and abiding spirit, not merely isolated acts now and then. Moreover they must not bow to worldly greed or ambition, which produces fear of worldly power.

1268 Others may call themselves by what names they like. True guidance is shown by the tests here indicated.

19. Do ye make the giving(1269) of drink to pilgrims, or the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque, equal to (the pious service of) those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and strive with might and main in the cause of Allah. They are not comparable in the sight of Allah. and Allah guides not those who do wrong.

1269 Giving drinks of cold water to thirsty pilgrims, and doing material services to a mosque are meritorious acts, but they are only external. If they do not touch the soul, their value is slight. Far greater, in the sight of Allah, are Faith, Endeavour, and self-surrender to Allah. Men who practise these will obtain honour in the sight of Allah. Allah's light and guidance comes to them, and not to those self-sufficient beings who think that a little show of what the world considers piety is enough.

20. Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main, in Allah's cause,(1270) with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah. they are the people who will achieve (salvation).

1270 Here is a good description of Jihad. It may require fighting in Allah's cause, as a form of self-sacrifice. But its essence consists in (1) a true and sincere Faith, which so fixes its gaze on Allah, that all selfish or worldly motives seem paltry and fade away, and (2) in earnest and ceaseless activity, involving the sacrifice (if need be) of life, person, or property, in the service of Allah. Mere brutal fighting is opposed to the whole spirit of Jihad, while the sincere scholar's pen or preacher's voice or wealthy man's contributions may be the most valuable forms of Jihad.

21. Their Lord doth give them glad tidings of a Mercy from Himself, of His good pleasure, and of gardens for them, wherein are delights that endure:

22. They will dwell therein for ever. Verily in Allah.s presence is a reward, the greatest (of all).(1271)

1271 Those who strive and suffer in Allah's cause are promised (1) a mercy specially from Himself, (2) His own good pleasure, (3) gardens of perpetual delight, (4) the supreme reward, Allah's own Presence or nearness. These are in

gradation: (1) is a special mercy, higher than flows out to all creatures; (2) is a consciousness of Allah's good pleasure, which raises the soul above itself; (3) is that state of permanent spiritual assurance, which is typified by gardens of perpetual delight, and (4) is the final bliss, which is the sight of Allah Himself, (R).

23. O ye who believe! take not for protectors your fathers and your brothers if they love infidelity above Faith: if any of you do so, they do wrong.

24. Say: If it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kindred; the wealth that ye have gained; the commerce in which ye fear a decline: or the dwellings in which ye delight-(1272) are dearer to you than Allah, or His Messenger, or the striving in His cause;- then wait until Allah brings about(1273) His decision: and Allah guides not the rebellious.

1272 Man's heart clings to (1) his own kith and kin-parents, children, brothers and sisters, husbands or wives, or other relatives, (2) wealth and prosperity, (3) commerce or means of profit and gain, or (4) noble buildings, for dignity or comfort. If these are a hindrance in Allah's cause, we have to choose which we love most. We must love Allah even if it involves the sacrifice of all else.

1273 If we love our earthly ties and comforts, profits and pleasures, more than we love Allah, and therefore fail to respond to Allah's cause, it is not Allah's cause which will suffer. Allah's purpose will be accomplished,

I with or without us. But our failure to respond to His will must leave us spiritually poorer, bereft of grace and guidance: "for Allah guides not the rebellious".

This is of universal application. But it was strikingly illustrated in the case of those faithful ones who obeyed the Prophet's call, left the comfort of their homes in Makkah and suffered exile in Madinah, gave up their trade and their possessions, strove and fought for Allah's cause, sometimes against their own kith and kin or their own tribesmen who were enemies of Islam. They won through. Others were not prepared for such sacrifice, but their failure did not stop the accomplishment of Allah's plan and purpose.

25. Assuredly Allah did help you in many battle-fields and on the day of Hunayn:(1274) Behold! your great numbers elated you, but they availed you naught: the land, for all that it is wide, did constrain you, and ye turned back in retreat.(1275)

1274 Hunayn is on the road to Ta'if from Makkah about fourteen miles to the east of Makkah. It is a valley in the mountainous country between Makkah and Ta'if. Immediately after the conquest of Makkah, (A.H. 8), the Pagan idolaters, who were surprised and chagrined at the wonderful reception which Islam was receiving, organised a great gathering near Ta'if to concert plans for attacking the Prophet. The Hawazin and the Thaqif tribes took the lead and prepared a great expedition for Makkah, boasting of their strength and military skill. There was on the other hand a wave of confident enthusiasm among the Muslims at Makkah, in which the new Muslims joined. The enemy forces numbered about 4,000 but the Muslim force reached a total of ten or twelve thousand, as everyone wished to join. The battle was joined at Hunayn, as described in the next note.

1275 For the first time the Muslims had at Hunayn tremendous odds in their favour. But this itself constituted a danger. Many in their ranks had more enthusiasm than wisdom, more a spirit of elation than of faith and confidence in the righteousness of their cause. The enemy had the advantage of knowing the ground thoroughly. They laid an ambush in which the advance guard of the Muslim forces was caught. The country is hilly, in which the enemy concealed himself. As soon as the Muslim vanguard entered the Hunayn valley, the enemy fell upon them with fury and caused havoc with their arrows from their places of concealment. In such ground the numbers of the Muslims were themselves a disadvantage. Many were slain, and many turned back in confusion and retreat. But the Prophet, as ever, was calm in his wisdom and faith. He rallied his forces and inflicted the most crushing defeat on the enemy.

26. But Allah did pour His calm(1276) on the Messenger and on the Believers, and sent down forces which ye saw not: He punished the Unbelievers; thus doth He reward those without Faith.

1276 *Sakinah:* calm, peace, security, tranquility. *Cf.* 2:248. The Prophet never approved of over-weening confidence, or reliance merely upon human strength, or human resources or numbers. In the hour of danger and seeming disaster, he was perfectly calm, and with cool courage relied upon the help of Allah, Whose standard he carried. His calmness inspired all around him, and stopped the rout of those who had turned their backs. It was with Allah's help that they won, and their victory was complete. They followed it up with an energetic pursuit of the enemies, capturing their camps, their flocks and herds, and their families, whom they had boastfully brought with them in expectation of an easy victory.

27. Again will Allah, after this,(1277) turn (in mercy) to whom He will: for Allah is Oft- forgiving, Most Merciful.

1277 Examples of Allah's mercy and grace in difficult circumstances in one case illustrate His grace and mercy at all times to those who have faith.

28. O ye who believe! Truly the Pagans are unclean;(1278) so let them not, after this year of theirs,(1279) approach the Sacred Mosque. And if ye fear poverty,(1280) soon will Allah enrich you, if He wills, out of His bounty, for Allah is All-knowing, All-wise.

1278 *Unclean:* both literally and metaphorically; because Muslims are enjoined to be strict in ablutions and physical cleanliness, as well as in purity of mind and heart, so that their word can be relied upon.

1279 *This year of theirs: there* is a two-fold meaning: (1) now that you have complete control of Makkah, and are charged with the purity of worship there, shut out all impurity from this year; (2) you have seen how the Pagans have behaved this year; their year of power and misuse of that power may be called *their year,* it is over, and now you Muslims are responsible.

1280 The concourse in Makkah added to the profits of trade and commerce. "But fear not," we are told; "the Pagans are a waning power, bound to disappear, and you should strengthen your own community, that they may more than counterbalance the apparent loss of custom; and Allah has other means of improving your economic position." This actually happened. The Pagans were extinguished from Arabia , and the concourse of Pilgrims from all parts of the world increased the numbers more than a hundredfold. Here is common-sense, wisdom, and statesmanship, even if we look at it from a purely human point of view.

29. Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizyah(1281) with willing submission,(1282) and feel themselves subdued.

1281 *Jizyah:* the root meaning is compensation. The derived meaning, which became the technical meaning, was a poll tax levied from those who did not accept Islam, but were willing to live under the protection of Islam, and were thus tacitly willing to submit to its ideals being enforced in the Muslim State . There was no amount permanently fixed for it, and in any case it was merely symbolical-an acknowledgment that those whose religion was tolerated would in their turn not interfere with the preaching and progress of Islam. Imam Shafi' suggests one dinar per year, which would be the Arabian gold dinar of the Muslim States, equivalent in value to about half a sovereign, or about 5 or 7 rupees. See n. 410 to 3:75. The tax varied in amount, and there were exemptions for the poor, for females and children (according to Abu Hanifah), for slaves, and for monks and hermits. Being a tax on able-bodied males of military age, it was in a sense a commutation for military service. But see the next note.

1282 *'An Yadin* (literally, from the hand) has been variously interpreted. The hand being the symbol of power and authority, I accept the interpretation "in token of willing submission." The *Jizyah* was thus partly symbolic and partly a commutation for military service, but as the amount was insignificant and the exemptions numerous, its symbolic character predominated. See the last note.

30. The Jews call ´Uzair a son(1283) of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate(1284) what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah.s curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!(1285)

1283 In n. 718 to 5:18 ,1 have quoted passages from the Old Testament, showing how freely the expression "sons of God" was used by the Jews. A sect of them called 'Uzayr a son of God, according to al Baidawi. In Appendix II (Surah 5.) I have shown that the constitution of Judaism dates from 'Uzayr (Ezra). The Christians still call Christ the Son of God.

1284 Taking men for gods or sons of God was not a new thing. All ancient mythologies have fables of that kind. There was less excuse for such blasphemies after the Prophets of Allah had clearly explained our true relation to Allah than in the times of primitive ignorance and superstition.

1285 *Cf.* 5:75.

31. They take their priests(1286) and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of Allah,(1287) and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One Allah. there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him:(1288) (Far is He) from having the partners they associate (with Him).

1286 *Ahb'ar.* doctors of law; priests; learned men. *Cf.* 5:44 , where they are associated with Rabbis. *Ruhban:* monks, ascetics, anchorites, men who have renounced the world; where there is a celibate clergy, the term can be applied to them as well as to members of monastic orders. It is also permissible to apply the term to "saints", where they are deified or credited with divine powers, or where people pray to them as they do in the Roman Catholic Church.

1287 Priest worship, and the worship of saints and ascetics is a form of superstition to which men have been prone in all ages. The growth of Jewish superstition is shown in the Talmud, and of Christian superstition in the doctrine of papal infallibility and the worship of saints. The mere idea of a separate order of priesthood to stand between Allah and man and be the exclusive repository of Allah's secrets is derogatory to the goodness and all-pervading grace of Allah. The worship of "lords many and gods many" was not confined only to the Pagans. The deification of the son of Mary is put here in a special clause by itself, as it held (and still holds) in its thrall a large portion of civilised humanity.

1288 *Cf.* 6:100.

32. Fain would they extinguish Allah.s light with their mouths,(1289) but Allah will not allow but that His light should be perfected, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it).

1289 *With their mouths:* there is a twofold meaning: (1) the old-fashioned open oil lamps were extinguished by blowing with the mouth: the Unbelievers would like to blow out Allah's Light as It is a cause of offence to them; (2) false teachers and preachers distort the Message of Allah by the false words of their mouth. Their wish is to put out the light of Truth for they are people of darkness; but Allah will perfect His Light, *i.e.,* make It shine all the brighter in the eyes of men. His Light in itself is ever perfect, but It will penetrate the hearts of men more and more, and so become more and more perfect for them.

33. It is He Who hath sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth, to prevail it(1290) over all religion, even though the Pagans may detest (it).

1290 Every religion which commends itself widely to human beings and lasts through some space of time has a glimpse of Truth in it. But Islam being the perfect light of Truth is bound to prevail. As the greater Light, through its own strength, outshines all lesser lights, so will Islam outshine all else, in spite of the displeasure of those to whom light is an offence. See also 48:28, n. 4912, and 61:9, n. 5442.

34. O ye who believe! there are indeed many among the priests and anchorites, who in falsehood(1291) devour the substance of men and hinder (them) from the way of Allah. And there are those who bury gold and silver(1292) and spend it not in the way of Allah. announce unto them a most grievous penalty-

1291 *Bil batili* = in falsehood, *i.e.,* by false means, pretences, or in false or vain things. This was strikingly exemplified in the history of Mediaeval Europe, though the disease is apt to attack all peoples and organisations at all times. Priests got rich by issuing indulgences and dispensations; they made their office a stepping stone to worldly power and possessions. Even the Monastic Orders, which took vows of poverty for individuals grew rich with corporate property, until their wealth became a scandal, even among their own nations.

1292 Misuse of wealth, property, and resources is frequently condemned, and in three ways: (1) do not acquire anything wrongfully or on false pretences; (2) do not hoard or bury or amass wealth for its own sake but use it freely for good, whether for yourself or for your neighbours; and (3) be particularly careful not to waste it for idle purposes, but only so that it may fructify for the good of the people.

35. On the Day when heat(1293) will be produced out of that (wealth) in the fire of Hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs, their flanks, and their backs.- "This is the (treasure) which ye buried for yourselves:(1294) taste ye, then, the (treasures) ye buried!"

1293 Gold and silver, symbolising wealth which these people cherished even more than the good pleasure of their Lord, will not only be the cause but the instrument whereby they would receive a grievous punishment (Ed.)

1294 The voice enforces the moral: "did you expect satisfaction or salvation from the treasures that you misused? Behold! they add to your torment!"

36. The number of months(1295) in the sight of Allah is twelve (in a year)- so ordained by Him the day He created the heavens and the earth; of them four are sacred: that is the straight usage. So wrong not yourselves(1296) therein, and fight the Pagans all together as they fight you all together. But know that Allah is with those who restrain themselves.

1295 This and the following verse must be read together. They condemn the arbitrary and selfish conduct of the Pagan Arabs, who, because there was a long-established custom of observing four months as those in which fighting was forbidden, changed the months about or added or deducted months when it suited them, to get an unfair advantage over the enemy. The four Prohibited Months were: Dhu al Qa'dah, Dhu al Hijjah, Muharram, and Rajab. If it suited them they postponed one of these months, and so a prohibited month became an ordinary month: while their opponents might hesitate to fight, they got an undue advantage. It also upset the security of the Month of Pilgrimage. This very ancient usage made for fair dealing all round, and its infraction by the Pagans is condemned.

The question of a solar astronomical year as against the lunar Islamic year does not arise here. But it may be noted that the Arab year was roughly luni-solar like the Hindu year, the months being lunar and the intercalation of a month every three years brought the year nearly but not accurately up to the solar reckoning. From the year of the Farewell Pilgrimage (A.H. 10) the Islamic year was definitely fixed as a purely lunar year of roughly 354 days, the months being calculated by the actual appearance of the moon. After that, every month of the Islamic year came about 11 days earlier in the solar year, and thus the Islamic months travelled all round the seasons and the solar year. (R).

1296 The Muslims were at a disadvantage on account of their scruples about the Prohibited Months. They are told not to wrong themselves in this. If the Pagans fought in all months on one pretence or another, they were allowed to defend themselves in all months. But self-restraint was (as always) recommended as far as possible.

37. Verily the transposing(1297) (of a prohibited month) is an addition to Unbelief: the Unbelievers are led to wrong thereby: for they make it lawful one year, and forbidden another year, in order to adjust the number of months forbidden by Allah and make such forbidden ones lawful. The evil of their course seems pleasing(1298) to them. But Allah guideth not those who reject Faith.

1297 To meddle with an old-fashioned custom of close time for warfare during Prohibited or Sacred Months was not only a demonstration of the Unbelievers against the Muslims on account of their Faith, but was wrong and unjust in itself, as it abolished a wholesome check on unregulated warfare, and prejudiced the law-abiding side by arbitrary decisions.

1298 *Cf.* 6:122. The lawless man thinks he is doing a great thing in getting the better of those who are careful to observe a law they believe in. But the lawless man loses the guidance of Faith, which is a symbol of his being guided by Allah; he will therefore lose in the end.

38. O ye who believe! what is the matter with you,(1299) that, when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah, ye cling heavily to the earth?(1300) Do ye prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the Hereafter.

1299 The immediate reference is to the expedition to Tabuk (A.H. 9), for which see the Introduction to this Surah. But the lesson is perfectly general. When a call is made on behalf of a great cause, the fortunate ones are those who have the privilege of responding to the call. The unfortunate ones are those who are so engrossed in their parochial affairs that they turn a deaf ear to the appeal. They are suffering from a spiritual disease.

1300 *(Cf.* 13:26). The choice is between two courses: will you choose a noble adventure and the glorious privilege of following your spiritual leader, or grovel in the earth for some small worldly gain or for fear of worldly loss? The people who hesitated to follow the call of TabTik were deterred by (1) the heat of the summer, in which the expedition was undertaken on account of the threat to the existence of the little community, and (2) the fear of losing the fruit harvest, which was ripe for gathering.

39. Unless ye go forth,(1301) He will punish you with a grievous penalty, and put others in your place; but Him ye would not harm in the least. For Allah hath power over all things.

1301 *Tanfiru* = go forth, march onward, be ready to strive and suffer. For this is the condition of all progress in the spiritual and moral, as well as in the physical, world. According to the homely English proverb, God helps those who help themselves. Inactivity and lethargy are fatal. No one can rest on his oars. Man is not necessary to Allah, but Allah is necessary to man. If a nation receives favours and fails to deserve them, it will be replaced by another: as has so often happened in history. We may take this as a special warning to Islamic nations.

40. If ye help not (your leader), (it is no matter): for Allah did indeed help him,(1302) when the Unbelievers drove him out: he had no more than one companion;(1303) they two were in the cave, and he said to his companion, "Have no fear, for Allah is with us": then Allah sent down His peace upon him,(1304) and strengthened him with forces which ye saw not, and humbled(1305) to the depths the word of the Unbelievers. But the word of Allah is exalted to the heights: for Allah is Exalted in might, Wise.

1302 The Tabuk expedition was not a failure. Though some hesitated, many more joined in. But a more striking example was when the Prophet was forced to leave Makkah and performed his famous *Hijrah.* His enemies plotted for his life. He had already sent his followers on to Madinah. Ali had volunteered to face his enemies in his house. His single companion was Abu Bakr. The two concealed themselves in the cave of Thawr , three miles from Makkah, for three nights, with the enemy prowling around in great numbers in fruitless search of them. "We are but two," said Abu Bakr. "Nay," said Muhammad, "for Allah is with us." Faith gave their minds peace, and Allah gave them safety. They reached Madinah, and a glorious chapter opened for Islam. The forces that helped them were not seen, but their power was irresistible. (R).

1303 Literally, "the second of two," which afterwards became Abu Bakr's proud title.

1304 *Cf.* 9:26 .

1305 The superlatives in the Arabic I have rendered by the periphrases, "humbled to the depths" and "exalted to the heights," as they accord better with the genius of the English language. The enemies of Islam had boasted that they would root it out: the result showed them up as ridiculous and despicable.

41. Go ye forth, (whether equipped)(1306) lightly or heavily, and strive and struggle, with your goods and your persons, in the cause of Allah. That is best for you, if ye (but) knew.

1306 *Whether equipped lightly or heavily,* to be taken both literally and metaphorically. All were invited, and they were to bring such resources as they had—lightly armed or heavily armed, on foot or mounted, experienced men for posts of danger, raw men for duties for which they were fit-all would and should help. Even those who were too old or feeble to go could contribute such money or resources as they had.

42. If there had been immediate gain (in sight), and the journey easy, they would (all) without doubt have followed thee, but the distance was long, (and weighed) on them. They would indeed swear by Allah, "If we only could, we should certainly have come out with you": They would destroy their own souls;(1307) for Allah doth know that they are certainly lying.

1307 The arts and excuses of the Hypocrites are here exposed. If there had been booty in sight or an easy walk-over, they would have come. All their oaths are false, and in taking the false oaths they are destroying their spiritual life. Indeed the backsliders are jeopardising their own physical lives in hanging back. If the enemy succeeded, they would all suffer.

43. Allah give thee grace!(1308) why didst thou grant them until those who told the truth were seen by thee in a clear light, and thou hadst proved the liars?

1308 Literally, "Allah give thee forgiveness!" But there is no question of fault here, and Imam Razi understands the expression to mean an exclamation-as one might say in English, "God bless you!" In Shakespeare "God save you!" is a simple friendly greeting, without any question of danger: *e.g.,* in "Much Ado about Nothing," iii. 2. 82. Note that in 3:152, last clause, "forgiveness" is put in juxtaposition to "grace" as having closely allied meanings. What the Holy Prophet had done in the Tabuk expedition was that he had been granting exemptions which may appear from a military point of view too liberal. He was actuated by motives of kindness as well as policy-kindness, because, in the urgency of the moment he did not wish anyone who had a real excuse to be refused exemption; and policy, because, if any one did not come with hearty good will, he would be a burden instead of a help to the army. The policy was justified, because in fact 30,000 men or more followed him. But that did not in any way justify the slackers, and in a review of the position, the slackers and hypocrites are justly condemned.

44. Those who believe in Allah and the Last Day ask thee for no exemption from fighting with their goods and persons. And Allah knoweth well those who do their duty.

45. Only those ask thee for exemption who believe not in Allah and the Last Day, and whose hearts are in doubt, so that they are tossed(1309) in their doubts to and fro.

1309 Doubt takes away all stability of conduct, while Faith makes a man firm in action and cool and collected in mind.

46. If they had intended to come out, they would certainly have made some preparation therefor; but Allah was averse to their being sent forth; so He made them lag behind, and they were told, "Sit ye among those who sit (inactive)."

47. If they had come out with you, they would not have added to your (strength) but only (made for) disorder, hurrying to and fro in your midst(1310) and sowing sedition among you, and there would have been some among you who would have listened to them. But Allah knoweth well those who do wrong.

1310 *Khitalhas* more than one meaning, but I follow the interpretation of Raghib and the majority of accepted Commentators, who take it to mean "in your midst",

48. Indeed they had plotted sedition before, and upset matters for thee, until,- the Truth arrived, and the Decree of Allah became manifest much to their disgust.(1311)

1311 Evil plotters against Truth are only too glad to get an opportunity of meddling from within with affairs which they want to spoil or upset. They plot from outside, but they like to get into the inner circle, that their chances of intrigue may be all the greater. They are, however, unwilling to incur any danger or any self-sacrifice. The whole of their activities are directed to mischief. Great wisdom is required in a leader to deal with such a situation, and the best of such leaders must need divine guidance, as was forthcoming in this case.

49. Among them is (many) a man who says: "Grant me exemption and draw me not(1312) into trial." Have they not fallen into trial already? and indeed Hell surrounds the Unbelievers (on all sides).

1312 *Fitnah,* as explained in n. 1198, 8:25, may mean either trial or temptation, or else tumult, turmoil, or sedition. The Commentators here take the former

meaning, and explain that some Hypocrites claimed exemption from service in the Tabuk expedition in the direction of Syria on the plea that they could not withstand the charms of Syrian women and ought best to stay at home. The answer is: "But you have already fallen into temptation here by refusing service and disobeying the call." But perhaps the other meaning of "turmoil" may also be permissible as a secondary echo: in that case they object to be drawn into the turmoil of war, but they are told that they are already in a moral turmoil in advancing a disingenuous plea. In using the English word "trial" in the translation, I have also had in my mind the two shades of meaning associated with that word in English.

50. If good befalls thee, it grieves them; but if a misfortune befalls thee, they say, "We took indeed our precautions beforehand," and they turn away rejoicing.

51. Say: "Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our protector": and on Allah let the Believers put their trust.

52. Say: "Can you expect for us (any fate) other than one of two glorious things- (Martyrdom or victory)? But we can expect for you either that Allah will send his punishment from Himself, or by our hands. So wait (expectant); we too will wait with you."(1313)

1313 The waiting of the Unbelievers and that of the Believers are in different senses. The Unbelievers wish for disaster to the Believers, but the Believers will either conquer or die as martyrs in the Cause, in either case happy in the issue. The Believers expect punishment for the Unbelievers for their infidelity, either through their own instrumentality, or in some other way in Allah's Plan, and the Unbelievers would not like it in either case. (*Cf.* 6:158, 20:135, and 52:31).

53. Say: "Spend (for the cause) willingly or unwillingly:(1314) not from you will it be accepted: for ye are indeed a people rebellious and wicked."

1314 The Hypocrites, who secretly plotted against Islam, might sometimes (and they did) make a show of making some contribution to the Cause in order to keep up their pretence. Their contributions were not acceptable, whether they seemed to give willingly or unwillingly, because rebellion and disobedience were in their hearts. Three reasons are specifically given for their rejection, in the next verse: (1) they did not believe; (2) their prayers were not earnest, but for mere show; and (3) in reality their hearts were not behind the contributions which they offered. Nothing is acceptable to Allah which does not proceed from a pure and sincere heart.

54. The only reasons why their contributions are not accepted are: that they reject Allah and His Messenger. that they come to prayer without earnestness; and that they offer contributions unwillingly.

55. Let not their wealth nor their (following in) sons(1315) dazzle thee: in reality Allah.s plan is to punish them with these things in this life,(1316) and that their souls may perish in their (very) denial of Allah.

1315 If they appeared to be prosperous, with their purses and their quivers full (metaphorically), they were not to be envied. In reality their wealth and their sons might themselves be a snare: *Cf.* 8:28 . On this particular occasion this was proved to the hilt. The wealth of the Pagans filled them with pride, darkened their understanding, and led to their destruction. Their sons and followers adopted the Faith which their fathers had fought against, much to the chagrin of the fathers, whose spiritual death was even worse than their discomfiture in this world.

1316 *Cf.* 3:176-178 and 9:85.

56. They swear by Allah that they are indeed of you; but they are not of you: yet they are afraid (to appear in their true colours).

57. If they could find a place to flee to, or caves, or a place of concealment, they would turn straightaway thereto, with an obstinate rush.(1317)

1317 *Jamaha* to be ungovernable, to run like a runaway horse, to rush madly and obstinately.

58. And among them are men who slander thee in the matter of (the distribution of) the alms:(1318) if they are given part thereof, they are pleased, but if not, behold! they are indignant!

1318 *Sadaqah* - alms, that which is given in Allah's name, mainly to the poor and needy, and for the cognate purposes specified in the next verse but one. Zakah is the regular and obligatory charity in an organised Muslim community, usually 2 1/2 per cent of merchandise and 10 percent on the fruits of the earth. There is a vast body of literature on this subject. The main points may be studied in *Al Hidaya fi al Furu,* ' of Shaikh Burhanud-din 'Ali. As against zakah the term sadaqah has a much wider connotation, and is inclusive of zakah as in the verse 60 of this Surah. (R).

59. If only they had been content with what Allah and His Messenger gave them, and had said, "Sufficient unto us is Allah. Allah and His Messenger will soon give us of His bounty: to Allah do we turn our hopes!" (that would have been the right course).(1319)

1319 Selfish men think that charitable funds are fair game for raids, but the Islamic standards on this subject are very high. The enforcement of such standards is always unpopular, and even the Holy Prophet was subjected to obloquy and slander for his strictness to principle. In doubtful cases, claimants who are disappointed should not blame the principles or those who enforce them, but put their trust in Allah, whose bounties are unbounded, and are given to all, whether rich or poor, according to their needs and their desserts. For everyone it is excellent advice to say: deserve before you desire.

60. Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to Truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of Allah. and for the wayfarer:(1320) (thus is it) ordained by Allah, and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

1320 Zakah or charitable gifts are to be given to the poor and the needy and those who are employed in their service. That is, charitable funds are not to be diverted to other uses, but the genuine expenses of administering charity are properly chargeable to such funds. Who are the needy? Besides the ordinary indigent, there are certain classes of people whose need is great and should be relieved. Those mentioned here are: (1) men who have been weaned from hostility to Truth, who would probably be persecuted by their former associates, and require assistance until they establish new connections in their new environment; (2) those in bondage, literally and figuratively; captives of war must be redeemed; slaves should be helped to freedom; those in the bondage of ignorance or superstition or unfavourable environment should be helped to freedom to develop their own gifts; (3) those who are held in the grip of debt should be helped to economic freedom; (4) those who are struggling and striving in Allah's Cause by teaching or fighting or in duties assigned to them by the righteous Imam, who are thus unable to earn their ordinary living; and (5) strangers stranded on the way. All these have a claim to charity. They should be relieved by individual or organised effort, but in a responsible way. In this verse, the word *sadaqah* refers to obligatory charity (zakah). See n. 1318 above. (R).

61. Among them are men who molest the Prophet and say, "He is (all) ear."(1321) Say, "He listens to what is best for you: he believes in Allah, has faith in the Believers, and is a Mercy to those of you who believe." But those who molest the Messenger will have a grievous penalty.

1321 The assonance of the Arabic words *"yu'dhuna"* and *"udhun"* is of course lost in the Translation. But the sense remains. Detractors of the Prophet said: "O! he listens to everybody !" "Yes," is the answer, "he listens for their good; he is a mere)' and a blessing to all men of Faith, but specially to you (who are addressed)." The general statement is emphasised for the particular people addressed.

62. To you they swear by Allah. In order to please you: But it is more fitting that they should please Allah and His Messenger, if they are Believers.

63. Know they not that for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, is the Fire of Hell?- wherein they shall dwell. That is the supreme disgrace.

64. The Hypocrites are afraid(1322) lest a Sura should be sent down about them, showing them what is (really passing) in their hearts. Say: "Mock ye! But verily Allah will bring to light all that ye fear (should be revealed).

1322 The dissection of the motives of the Hypocrites alarmed them. For it meant that they would fail in their policy of having the best of both worlds and undermining the loyalty of the weaker members of the Muslim community. So they turn it off as a jest. But they are sharply rebuked: "Can you make such solemn matters subjects of playful jokes? Fie upon you! You are found out, and your guile is of no effect." (R).

65. If thou dost question them, they declare (with emphasis): "We were only talking idly and in play." Say: "Was it at Allah, and His Signs, and His Messenger, that ye were mocking?"

66. Make ye no excuses: ye have rejected Faith after ye had accepted it. If We pardon some of you, We will punish others amongst you, for that they are in sin.(1323)

1323 See last note. Hypocrisy is a halfway house, a state of indecision in the choice between good and evil. Those who definitely range themselves with good obtain forgiveness; those who pass definitely to evil suffer the penalties of evil.

67. The Hypocrites, men and women, (have an understanding) with each other:(1324) They enjoin evil, and forbid what is just, and are close(1325) with their hands. They have forgotten Allah. so He(1326) hath forgotten them. Verily the Hypocrites are rebellious and perverse.

1324 Literally, "the Hypocrites . . . are of each other". The forms of hypocrisy may vary, but they are all alike, and they understand each other's hypocrisy. They hold together.

1325 The English phrase "close-fisted" would cover only a part of the meaning. The hand is the symbol of power, help, and assistance. They may be financial, or it may be in other ways. The Hypocrites pretend a great deal, but are of no use or real help to anyone.

1326 *Cf.* 7:51 and n. 1029. They ignore Allah: and Allah will ignore them.

68. Allah hath promised the Hypocrites men and women, and the rejecters, of Faith, the fire of Hell: Therein shall they dwell: Sufficient is it for them: for them is the curse of Allah,(1327) and an enduring punishment,-

1327 "Curse," here as elsewhere, is deprivation of grace and mercy, brought about by the rejection of Allah by the Unbelievers.

69. As in the case of those before you: they were mightier than you in power, and more flourishing in wealth and children. They had their enjoyment of their portion: and ye have of yours, as did those before you; and ye indulge in idle talk as they did. They!- their work are fruitless in this world and in the Hereafter, and they will lose (all spiritual good).

70. Hath not the story reached them of those before them?- the People of Noah, and ´Ad,(1328) and Thamud; the People of Abraham, the men(1329) of Midian, and the cities overthrown.(1330) To them came their messengers with clear signs. It is not Allah Who wrongs them, but they wrong their own souls.

1328 The story of Noah is told in 7:59-64; of 'Ad in 7:65-72; and of Thamud in 7:73-79; of Abraham in numerous places, but see specially 6:74-82; of Midianites in 7:85-93; and of Lot and the Cities of the Plain overthrown for their wickedness, in 7:80-84.

1329 In the case of Noah and Abraham, the word I have translated as "people of..." is *qawm;* these prophets were messengers each to his own people or nation, as was also Hud to the 'Ad people and Salih to the Thamud people. The word used for the Midianites is *Ashabi Madyan,* which I have translated "men of Midian" for want of a better word. The Midianites were for the greater part of their history nomads, with pasture grounds but no settled territory or town. The town of Madyan on the Gulf of 'Aqabah refers to much later times when the Midianites as a people had ceased to count. See n. 1053 to 7:85.

1330 The Cities of Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah , to whom Lot preached in vain to desist from their abominations: 7:80-84.

71. The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practise regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is Exalted in power, Wise.

72. Allah hath promised to Believers, men and women, gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting bliss. But the greatest bliss is the good pleasure of Allah. that is the supreme felicity.

73. O Prophet! strive hard against the unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell,- an evil refuge indeed.

74. They swear by Allah that they said nothing (evil), but indeed they uttered blasphemy, and they did it after accepting Islam; and they meditated(1331) a plot which they were unable to carry out: this revenge of theirs was (their) only return for the bounty with which Allah and His Messenger had enriched them! If they repent, it will be best for them; but if they turn back (to their evil ways), Allah will punish them with a grievous penalty in this life and in the Hereafter: They shall have none on earth to protect or help them.

1331 The reference is to a plot made by the Prophet's enemies to kill him when he was returning from Tabuk. The plot failed. It was all the more dastardly in that some of the conspirators were among the men of Madinah, who were enriched by the general prosperity that followed the peace and good government established through Islam in Madinah. Trade flourished; justice was firmly administered with an even hand. And the only return that these men could make was a return of evil for good. That was their revenge, because Islam aimed at suppressing selfishness, stood for the rights of the poorest and humblest, and judged worth by righteousness rather than by birth or position.

75. Amongst them are men who made a covenant with Allah, that if He bestowed on them of His bounty, they would give (largely) in charity, and be truly amongst those who are righteous.

76. But when He did bestow of His bounty, they became covetous, and turned back (from their covenant), averse (from its fulfilment).

77. So He hath put as a consequence(1332) hypocrisy into their hearts, (to last) till the Day, whereon they shall meet Him: because they broke their covenant with Allah, and because they lied (again and again).

1332 If men are false to their covenants and words, the natural consequence will be hypocrisy to cover their falsehood. All consequences of our own acts are in Qur'anic language ascribed to Allah. Such consequences will last till the Day of Judgement, when they will have to account for their deeds. They may think that they are deceiving men by *their* hypocrisy, but they cannot deceive Allah, to Whom all their most secret thoughts and plots and doings are known.

78. Know they not that Allah doth know their secret (thoughts) and their secret counsels, and that Allah knoweth well all things unseen?

79. Those who slander such of the believers as give themselves freely to (deeds of) charity, as well as such as can find nothing to give except the fruits of their labour,- and throw ridicule on them,-(1333) Allah will throw back their ridicule on them: and they shall have a grievous penalty.

1333 When financial help is necessary for the Cause, every Muslim contributes what he can. Those who can afford large sums are proud to bring them in of their own free will, and those who are very poor contribute their mite or their labour. Both kinds of gifts are equally precious because of the faith and good will behind them, and only cynics will laugh at the scantiness of the one or the lavishness of the other. Sometimes they not only laugh, but attribute wrong motives to the givers. Such conduct is here reprimanded.

80. Whether thou ask for their forgiveness, or not, (their sin is unforgivable): if thou ask seventy times(1334) for their forgiveness, Allah will not forgive them: because they have rejected Allah and His Messenger. and Allah guideth not those who are perversely rebellious.

1334 An awful warning for those who actively oppose the Cause of Allah. The Holy Prophet was by nature full of mercy and forgiveness. He prayed for his enemies. But in such a case even his prayers are nullified

by their attitude of rejecting Allah.

81. Those who were left behind (in the Tabuk expedition) rejoiced in their inaction behind the back of the Messenger of Allah. they hated to strive and fight, with their goods and their persons, in the cause of Allah. they said, "Go not forth in the heat.(1335)" Say, "The fire of Hell is fiercer in heat." If only they could understand!

1335 The Tabuk expedition had to be undertaken hurriedly in the heat of summer, because of a threat or fear of Byzantine invasion. They marched from Madinah about the month of September or October in the solar calendar.

82. Let them laugh a little: much will they weep(1336): a recompense for the (evil) that they do.

1336 They may sneer or ridicule or rejoice now: that will be only for a little; much will they have to weep for afterwards.

83. If, then, Allah bring thee back to any of them, and they ask thy permission to come out (with thee), say: "Never shall ye come out with me, nor fight an enemy with me: for ye preferred to sit inactive on the first occasion: Then sit ye (now) with those who lag behind."

84. Nor do thou ever pray for any of them that dies, nor stand at his grave;(1337) for they rejected Allah and His Messenger, and died in a state of perverse rebellion.

1337 On the death of a Muslim, it is the pious duty of every neighbouring Muslim who can, to assist in the simple funeral ceremonies—the prayer for mercy before the body is consigned to the grave, and the consignment of the body to the grave, by a simple, solemn, and dignified ritual. For those who have shown hostility to Islam, this would not be seemly and is forbidden. (R).

85. Nor let their wealth nor their (following in) sons dazzle thee: Allah.s plan is to punish them with these things in this world, and that their souls may perish in their (very) denial of Allah.(1338)

1338 Except for the omission of a single word ("life"), this verse repeats verse 55 above. But the repetition indicates the harmonious closing of the same argument in two aspects. In 9:55 it occurred in connection with the reasons for refusing to receive the contributions of such persons to the expenses of an enterprise which though vital to Islam's defence was secretly opposed by such persons. Here (in 9:85) it is a question of refusing to participate in the obsequies of such persons after their death: it is natural to omit the word "life" in this case.

86. When a Sura comes down, enjoining them to believe in Allah and to strive and fight along with His Messenger, those with wealth and influence among them ask thee for exemption, and say: "Leave us (behind): we would be with those who sit (at home)."

87. They prefer to be with (the women), who remain behind (at home)(1339): their hearts are sealed and so they understand not.

1339 *Khawalif,* plural of *Khalifah,* those (feminine) who remain behind at home when the men go to war; women. There is a stinging taunt in this, a suggestion that such men were cowards, preferring to remain behind like women when stiff work was to be done by men in defending their homes. They were not only cowards, but fools; as they did not understand their own best interests. If the enemy got the better of their brethren, they would themselves be crushed. "Their hearts are sealed": the habits of cowardice and hypocrisy which they have adopted have become their second nature.

88. But the Messenger, and those who believe with him, strive and fight with their wealth and their persons: for them are (all) good things(1340): and it is they who will prosper.

1340 "Good things," and "prosperity," are to be understood both in the physical and in the highest spiritual sense as the next verse makes clear.

89. Allah hath prepared for them gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein: that is the supreme felicity(1341).

1341 In this verse there is a reminiscence, but not an exact repetition, of verse 72 above. This balances the parallel repetition or reminiscence in verse 85 above. See n. 1338. The symmetry of the argument is thus completed, as regards the Hypocrites of Madinah, before we pass on to consider the case of the Hypocrites among the desert Bedouins in section 12.

90. And there were, among the desert Arabs (also), men who made excuses and came to claim exemption; and those who were false to Allah and His Messenger (merely) sat inactive(1342). Soon will a grievous penalty seize the Unbelievers among them.

1342 Not only had the Hypocrites a nest in Madman, but their tactics affected some of the village or desert Bedouins, who loved war and would have followed a standard of war even if no question of Faith or a sacred Cause was involved. But some of them, though professing Islam, were frightened by the hardships of the Tabuk expedition and the prospect of meeting the trained armies of the great Roman (Byzantine) Empire. They made all sorts of lying excuses, but really their want of faith made them ineligible for being enlisted in a sacred Cause, in the terms of 9:46 -47 and 9:53 -54. Some came to make excuses; others did not even come, but sat at home, ignoring the summons.

91. There is no blame(1343) on those who are infirm, or ill, or who find no resources to spend (on the cause), if they are sincere (in duty) to Allah and His Messenger. no ground (of complaint) can there be against such as do right: and Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

1343 Though active service in person or by contributing resources is expected in emergencies of every person who believes in the Cause, there are some who must necessarily be exempted without the least blame attached to them. Such would be those who are weak in body on account of age, sex, infirmity, or illness. Personal service in their case is out of the question, but they could contribute towards expenses if they are able. But if they are too poor to afford even such assistance, they are excused. But in all cases the motive must be sincere, and there should be a desire to serve and do such duty as they can. With such motives people are doing good or right in whatever form they express their service: sometimes, in Milton 's words, "they also serve who only stand and wait." In any case their purity

of motive would get Allah's grace and forgiveness, and we must not criticise even if we thought they might have done more.

92. Nor (is there blame) on those who came to thee to be provided with mounts(1344), and when thou saidst, "I can find no mounts for you," they turned back, their eyes streaming with tears of grief that they had no resources wherewith to provide the expenses.

1344 *Hamala, yahmilu,* here seems to mean: to provide means of transport, *viz.* mounts (horses, camels, etc.) for riding, and perhaps beasts of burden for carrying equipment and baggage, suitable to the rank of those concerned. It may possibly mean other facilities for getting about, such as boots and shoes, or provisions: for any army's march depends upon all these things. Where people fight as volunteers for a cause, without an extensive war fund, those who can afford it provide such things for themselves, but those without means, yet anxious to serve, have to be left behind. Their disappointment is in proportion to their eagerness to serve.

93. The ground (of complaint) is against such as claim exemption while they are rich. They prefer to stay with the (women) who remain behind: Allah hath sealed their hearts; so they know not (What they miss)(1345).

1345 *Cf.* 9:87, where similar phrases are used for similar shirking of duty by townsfolk, while here we are considering the desert folk. It is not only a duty, but a precious privilege, to serve a great Cause by personal self-sacrifice. Those who shirk such an opportunity know not what they miss.

94. They will present their excuses to you when ye return to them. Say thou: "Present no excuses: we shall not believe you: Allah hath already informed us of the true state of matters concerning you: It is your actions that Allah and His Messenger will observe: in the end will ye be brought back to Him Who knoweth what is hidden and what is open: then will He show you the truth of all that ye did."

95. They will swear to you by Allah, when ye return to them, that ye may leave them alone. So leave them alone: For they are an abomination, and Hell is their dwelling-place,-a fitting recompense for the (evil) that they did.

96. They will swear unto you, that ye may be pleased with them but if ye are pleased with them, Allah is not pleased with those who disobey.

97. The Arabs of the desert are the worst in Unbelief and hypocrisy, and most fitted to be in ignorance of the command which Allah hath sent down to His Messenger. But Allah is All-knowing, All-Wise.

98. Some of the desert Arabs look upon their payments(1346) as a fine, and watch for disasters for you: on them be the disaster of evil: for Allah is He That heareth and knoweth (all things).

1346 The payments refer to the regular Charity established by Islam—the obligatory alms. If you look upon them as a fine or a burden, their virtue is lost. If you rejoice that you have there an opportunity of helping the Community to maintain its standards of public assistance and to suppress the unseemly beggary and loathsome importunity whose relief is only governed by motives of getting rid of awkward obstacles on the way, then your outlook is entirely different. You wish for organised and effective efforts to solve the problems of human poverty and misery. In doing so, you get nearer to Allah, and you earn the good wishes and prayers of godly men, led by our Holy Leader, al Mustafa.

99. But some of the desert Arabs believe in Allah and the Last Day, and look on their payments as pious gifts bringing them nearer to Allah and obtaining the prayers of the Messenger. Aye, indeed they bring them nearer (to Him): soon will Allah admit them to His Mercy(1347): for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

1347 The Mercy of Allah is always present, as the sun is always shining. But when we have prepared ourselves to receive it, we come to the full enjoyment of it, as a man who was in a shade comes out by his effort into the open, and basks in sunshine.

100. The vanguard (of Islam)(1348)- the first of those who forsook (their homes) and of those who gave them aid, and (also) those who follow them in (all) good deeds,- well- pleased is Allah with them, as are they with Him: for them hath He prepared gardens under which rivers flow(1349), to dwell therein for ever: that is the supreme felicity.

1348 The vanguard of Islam—those in the first rank—are those who dare and suffer for the Cause and never flinch. The first historical examples are the *Muhajirs* and the *Ansar*. The *Muhajirs* —those who forsook their homes in Makkah and migrated to Madinah, the Holy Prophet being among the last to leave the post of danger, are mentioned first. Then come the *Ansar,* the Helpers, the citizens of Madinah who invited them, welcomed them, and gave them aid, and who formed the pivot of the new Community. Then are mentioned all who follow them in good deeds: not only the early heroes and ordinary men and women who had been Companions of the Prophet or had seen him, but men and women in all ages who have lived noble lives. In spite of all their sacrifices and suffering they rejoice in the precious gift of the Good Pleasure of Allah, and their Salvation is the Supreme Felicity which such Good Pleasure gives, symbolised by the Gardens of Heaven.

1349 Note the description of the final accomplishment of the destiny of man. In mathematical science it would be like a letter or formula which would sum up a long course of reasoning. In this very Surah it occurs before in 9:72 and 9:89, where see n. 1341. (R).

101. Certain of the desert Arabs round about you are hypocrites, as well as (desert Arabs) among the Medina folk(1350): they are obstinate in hypocrisy: thou knowest them not: We know them: twice shall We punish them(1351): and in addition shall they be sent to a grievous penalty.

1350 The desert Arabs were not all simple folk. There were cunning hypocrites among them: both among certain tribes encamped round about Madinah and certain others in Madinah itself. I understand that both groups are of the *A'rab,* to whom the context refers, and not of the settled citizens of Madinah, whose Hypocrites were already referred to in previous sections. They might look simple, but they were, in their ignorance, all the more obstinate and hypocritical.

1351 Their punishment in this world was double, *viz.,* not only in their discomfiture, but because in their obstinate ignorance, they failed to understand the accomplished facts, while cleverer men realised that their hostility to Islam was hopeless. In addition to their discomfiture in this life, they would have to meet the penalties to come.

102. Others (there are who) have acknowledged their wrong-doings: they have mixed an act that was good with another(1352) that was evil. Perhaps Allah will turn unto them (in Mercy): for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

1352 There were some whose will was weak and succumbed to evil, although there was much good in them. To them is held out the promise of forgiveness if they would repent and undertake all acts of Muslim charity, which would purify their souls, aided by the prayers of Allah's Messenger. Then would they get the Peace that comes from purity and right conduct.

103. Of their goods, take alms, that so thou mightest purify and sanctify them; and pray on their behalf. Verily thy prayers are a source of security for them: And Allah is One Who heareth and knoweth.

104. Know they not that Allah doth accept repentance from His votaries and receives their gifts of charity, and that Allah is verily He, the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful?

105. And say: "Work (righteousness)(1353): Soon will Allah observe your work, and His Messenger, and the Believers: Soon will ye be brought back to the knower

of what is hidden and what is open: then will He show you the truth of all that ye did."

1353 The repentant should be encouraged, after their repentance, to amend their conduct. The kindly interest of their brethren in them will strengthen them in virtue and blot out their past. When they go back into Eternity, they will understand the healing grace which saved them, just as the evil ones will then have their eyes opened to the real truth of their spiritual degradation (9:94). The similar words, in verse 94 and here, clench the contrast.

106. There are (yet) others, held in suspense for the command of Allah, whether He will punish them, or turn in mercy(1354) to them: and Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.

1354 Three categories of men are mentioned, whose faith was tested and found wanting in the Tabuk affair, but their characteristics are perfectly general, and we may here consider them in their general aspects: (1) the deep-dyed hypocrites, who when found out make excuses because otherwise they will suffer ignominy; they are unregenerate and obstinate, and there is no hope for them (9:101); (2) there are those who have lapsed into evil, but are not altogether evil; they repent and amend, and are accepted (9:102-105); and (3) there are doubtful cases, but Allah will judge them (9:106). A fourth category is mentioned in 9:107, which will be discussed later.

107. And there are those(1355) who put up a mosque by way of mischief and infidelity - to disunite the Believers - and in preparation for one(1356) who warred against Allah and His Messenger aforetime. They will indeed swear that their intention is nothing but good; But Allah doth declare that they are certainly liars.

1355 Three categories of Hypocrites having already been mentioned (n. 1354), a fourth class of insidious evildoers is now mentioned, whose type is illustrated in the *story* of the "Mosque of mischief *(dirar)*". When the Holy Prophet arrived at Madinah for Hijrah, he rested four days in Quba' before entering the town of Madinah . Here was built the first mosque, the "Mosque of Piety" *(Taqwa).* or the mosque of the power of Islam *(Quwat al Islam),* to which he frequently came during his subsequent stay in Madinah. Taking advantage of these sacred associations, some Hypocrites of the Tribe of Bani Ghanam built an opposition mosque in Dhu 'Awan, pretending to advance Islam. In reality they were in league with a notorious enemy of Islam, one Abu 'Amir, who had fought against Islam at Uhud. When the Prophet learned of their duplicity on his return from the battle of Tabuk, he ordered two of his companions to destroy the mosque and burn it to the ground, (eds.)

1356 Abu'Amir, surnamed the Rahib (Monk), as he had been in touch with Christian monks. See last note.

108. Never stand thou forth therein. There is a mosque whose foundation(1357) was laid from the first day on piety; it is more worthy of the standing forth (for prayer) therein. In it are men who love to be purified; and Allah loveth those who make themselves pure.(1358)

1357 The original "Mosque of Piety" built by the Holy Prophet himself.

1358 The true Muslim must be pure in body, mind, and heart. His motives should always be sincere, and his religion without any alloy of worldly gain.

109. Which then is best? - he that layeth his foundation on piety to Allah and His good pleasure? - or he that layeth his foundation on an undermined sand-cliff(1359) ready to crumble to pieces? and it doth crumble to pieces with him, into the fire of Hell. And Allah guideth not people that do wrong.

1359 A man who builds his life on Piety (which includes sincerity and the purity of all motives) and his hopes on the Good Pleasure of Allah, builds on a firm foundation of rock that will never be shaken. In contrast to him is the man who builds on a shifting sand cliff on the brink of an abyss, already undermined by forces which he does not see. The cliff and the foundations all crumble to pieces along with him, and he is plunged into the Fire of misery from which there is no escape.

110. The foundation of those who so build is never free from suspicion and shakiness(1360) in their hearts, until their hearts are cut to pieces. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.

1360 The parable is continued further. The heart of man is the seat of his hopes and fears, the foundation of his moral and spiritual life. If that foundation is on an undermined sand cliff already crumbling to pieces, what security or stability can he have? He is being shaken by alarms and suspicions and superstitions, until like the edge of a sand cliff they are cut clean away and fall into a heap of ruin and his spiritual life and all its landmarks are destroyed.

111. Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the garden (of Paradise):(1361) they fight in His cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in truth, through the Law, the Gospel, and the Qur´an:(1362) and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah. then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: that is the achievement supreme.

1361 In a human bargain both sides give something and receive some advantage. In the divine bargain of Allah with man, Allah takes man's will and soul and his wealth and goods, and gives him in return everlasting Felicity. Man fights in Allah's Cause and carries out His will. All that he has to give up is the ephemeral things of this world, while he gains eternal salvation, the fulfilment of his highest spiritual hopes-a supreme achievement indeed (C/. 61:10-12).

1362 We offer our whole selves and our possessions to Allah, and Allah gives us Salvation. This is the true doctrine of redemption; and we are taught that this is the doctrine not only of the Qur'an but of the earlier Revelations-the original Law of Moses and the original Gospel of Jesus. Any other view of redemption is rejected by Islam, especially that of corrupted Christianity, which thinks that some other person suffered for our sins and we are redeemed by his blood. It is our self-surrender that counts, not other people's merits. Our complete self-surrender may include fighting for the cause, both spiritually and physically. As regards actual fighting with the sword there has been some difference in theological theories at different times, but very little in the practice of those who framed those theories. The Jewish wars were ruthless wars of extermination. The Old Testament does not mince matters on the subject. In the New Testament St. Paul, in commending the worthy fruits of Faith, mentions Gideon, Barak, and other warriors of the Old Testament as his ideals, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms . . . waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens . . ." (Hebrews, 11:32-34). The monkish morality of the Gospels in their present form has never been followed by any self-respecting Christian or other nation in history. Nor is it common sense to ignore lust of blood in unregenerate man as a form of evil which has to be combatted "within the limits set by Allah" (9:112). (R).

112. Those that turn (to Allah)(1363) in repentance; that serve Him, and praise Him; that wander in devotion to the cause of Allah,: that bow down and prostrate themselves in prayer; that enjoin good and forbid evil; and observe the limit set by Allah.- (These do rejoice). So proclaim the glad tidings to the Believers.

1363 We are to rejoice that by giving up such small things as ourselves and our possessions we are to be rewarded with such a great thing as the eternal life of felicity. The truly righteous, whose lives in various aspects are described in this verse, do so rejoice. The good news is to be proclaimed to all Believers, including the weakest among us, so that they may profit by that example.

113. It is not fitting, for the Prophet and those who believe, that they should pray for forgiveness for Pagans, even though they be of kin, after it is clear to them that they are companions of the Fire.(1364)

1364 This is usually understood to refer to the prayer for the dead, (1) if they died unrepentant after Islam was preached to them, (2) if they actively resisted or opposed the Faith *to the last,* and (3) if the person praying knows that on account of deliberate contumacy the deceased may be said to have had the doors of mercy dosed to him. How is he to know? The knowledge must come from special commands as declared by the Holy Prophet in his lifetime regarding individuals. Where no light is available from this source we must follow the best judgement we can.

114. And Abraham prayed for his father´s forgiveness only because of a promise he had made to him.(1365) But when it became clear to him that he was an

enemy to Allah, he dissociated himself from him: for Abraham was most tender-hearted, forbearing.(1366)

1365 Abraham and his unbelieving father are referred to in 6:74. Apparently when Abraham was convinced that the conditions mentioned in the last note applied to his father, he gave up praying for him, as the physical bond was cut off by the spiritual hostility. For the promise to pray for his father, see 19:47, (see also n. 5413 to 60:4).

1366 Abraham was loyal and tender-hearted, and bore with much that he disapproved, being in this a prototype of al Mustafa, and it must have gone against his grain to cut off relations in that way. But it would obviously be wrong for a human being to entreat Allah for mercy on people who had finally rejected Allah.

115. And Allah will not mislead(1367) a people after He hath guided them, in order that He may make clear to them what to fear (and avoid)- for Allah hath knowledge of all things.

1367 Allah's clear commands are given, so that Believers may not be misled by their human frailty into unbecoming conduct.

116. Unto Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He giveth life and He taketh it. Except for Him ye have no protector nor helper.

117. Allah turned with favour to the Prophet, the Muhajirs,(1368) and the Ansar,- who followed him in a time of distress, after that the hearts of a part (1369)of them had nearly swerved (from duty); but He turned to them (also): for He is unto them Most Kind, Most Merciful.

1368 *Cf.* 9:100. The Muhajirs were the people who originally forsook their homes in Makkah and followed al Mustafa in exile to Madinah. The Ansar were the Madinah people who received them with honour and hospitality into their city. Both these groups were staunch supports of Islam, and proved their Faith by great sacrifices. But in the difficult days of the Tabuk expedition some of them, not perversely, but out of lethargy and human weakness, had failed to follow the standard. They were forgiven, and they afterwards acquitted themselves with zeal.

1369 Note that the "swerving from duty" was merely an inclination due to the weakness of human nature in the face of new difficulties; that it only affected a part of the men for a time; and that it was overcome even in their case by the grace of Allah, so that they all did their duty, and were freely forgiven their incipient weakness, which they conquered. There were three exceptions, which are referred to in the next verse.

118. (He turned in mercy also) to the three who were left behind; (they felt guilty)(1370) to such a degree that the earth seemed constrained to them, for all its spaciousness, and their (very) souls seemed straitened to them,- and they perceived that there is no fleeing from Allah (and no refuge) but to Himself. Then He turned to them, that they might repent: for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

1370 Among the Faithful, the largest number consisted of those who were perfectly staunch and ever ready to do their duty. They obtained the love and good pleasure of Allah. Next came a few who wavered because their will was weak and they were daunted by the dangers and difficulties that faced them; Allah's saving grace protected them and they conquered their weakness, and did not fail in their duty; Allah forgave them and accepted their repentance. Lastly, in the illustration taken from the Tabuk affair, there were some who actually failed in their duty, not from contumacy or ill will, but from thoughdessness, slackness, and human weakness: they actually failed to obey the Holy Prophet's summons, and were naturally called on to explain, and were excluded from the life of the Community. Their mental state is here described graphically. Though the earth is spacious, to them it was constrained. In their own souls they had a feeling of constraint. In worldly affluence they felt poor in spirit. They realised that they could not flee from Allah, but could only find solace and refuge in coming back to Him. They freely repented and showed it in their deeds, and Allah freely forgave them and took them to His grace. Though illustrated by the particular examples of the Ansar, *viz.,* Ka'b, Mararah, and Hilal, the lesson is perfectly general and is good for all times.

119. O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed).

120. It was not fitting for the people of Medina and the Bedouin Arabs of the neighbourhood, to refuse to follow Allah.s Messenger, nor to prefer their own lives to his: because nothing could they suffer or do, but was reckoned to their credit as a deed of righteousness,- whether they suffered thirst, or fatigue, or hunger, in the cause of Allah, or trod paths to raise the ire of the Unbelievers, or received any injury(1371) whatever from an enemy: for Allah suffereth not the reward to be lost of those who do good;-

1371 Again, the illustration is that of Tabuk, but the lesson is general. We must not hold our own comfort or lives dearer than that of our Leader, nor desert him in the hour of danger. If we have true devotion, we shall hold our own lives or comfort cheap in comparison to his. But whatever service we render to the Cause of Allah, and whatever sufferings, hardships, or injuries we endure, or whatever resources we spend for the Cause — all goes to raise our degree in the spiritual world. Nothing is lost. Our reward is far greater in worth than any little service we can render, or any little hardship we can suffer, or any little contributions we can make to the Cause. We "painfully attain to joy".

121. Nor could they spend anything (for the cause) - small or great- nor cut across a valley,(1372) but the deed is inscribed to their credit: that Allah may requite their deed with the best (possible reward).

1372 *Cut across a valley:* this is specially mentioned in a symbolical way, as denoting an individual act of heroism, dash, or bravery. To march with the troops along valleys, or, spiritually, tread paths of danger along with our Comrades, is good and praiseworthy; but one that dashes across a stream, all alone, for some special deed of bravery where the *elan* of comradeship does not sustain him, needs special mention. Notice that both the things mentioned in this verse—the spending of resources and the dashing across a valley—are individual acts, while those mentioned in the last verse are collective acts, which are in some ways easier. The individual acts having been mentioned, the next verse follows naturally.

122. Nor should the Believers all go forth together: if a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them,- that thus they (may learn)(1373) to guard themselves (against evil).

1373 Fighting may be inevitable, and where a call is made by the *(Amir al Mu'minin),* ruler of an Islamic State, it should be obeyed. But fighting is not to be glorified to the exclusion of all else. Even among those who are able to go forth, a party should remain behind—one in each township or circle—for purposes of study; so that when the fighters return home, their minds may be attuned again to the more normal interests of religious life, under properly instructed teachers. The students and teachers are soldiers of the Jihad in their spirit of obedience and discipline. (R).

123. O ye who believe! fight the unbelievers who gird you about,(1374) and let them find firmness in you: and know that Allah is with those who fear Him.

1374 When conflict becomes inevitable, the first thing is to clear our surroundings of all evil, for it is only evil that we can rightly fight To evil we must put up a stout and stiff resistance. Mealy-mouthed compromises are not right for soldiers of truth and righteousness. They are often a compound of cowardice, weariness, greed, and corruptibility.

124. Whenever there cometh down(1375) a sura, some of them say: "Which of you has had His faith increased by it?" Yea, those who believe,- their faith is increased and they do rejoice.

1375 The incompatibility of Unfaith and Faith are contrasted in this section in respect of revelation and the divine teacher. The Unbelievers laugh at revelation, and say to each other mockingly: "Does this increase your faith?" To the Believer every new aspect of Allah's truth as revealed increases his faith, and wonder, and gratitude. He rejoices, because he gets added strength for life and achievement.

125. But those in whose hearts(1376) is a disease,- it will add doubt to their doubt, and they will die in a state of Unbelief.

1376 *Cf.* 2:10 and several similar passages. Just as the light, which to healthy eyes gives enlightenment, causes pain to the diseased eye, which emits unclean matter, so to those spiritually diseased, Allah's grace is unwelcome, and they put forth more doubts to cover their disease. And they die in their disease, and of their [disease. Note the aptness of the metaphor.

126. See they not that they are tried every year(1377) once or twice? Yet they turn not in repentance, and they take no heed.

1377 Yet, in spite of their infidelity, one or two chances are given them every year. The door is not closed to them. Yet they deliberately turn away, and take no heed of all the warnings which their own nature and the teaching and example of good men should give them.

127. Whenever there cometh down a Sura, they look at each other, (saying), "Doth anyone see you?" Then they turn aside: Allah hath turned their hearts(1378) (from the light); for they are a people that understand not.

1378 Even the Unbelievers, in their hearts and conscience, feel uncomfortable when they turn aside from Faith and Truth, and therefore their turning aside is figured by furtive glances, such as we may suppose literally to have been cast by the Hypocrites in the assemblies of the Holy Prophet. Then they slink away feeling superior in their minds. And yet, if they only knew it, their contumacy deprives them of Allah's grace and light. They are turning Grace away, and when Allah withdraws it altogether, they perish utterly.

128. Now hath come unto you a Messenger from amongst yourselves: it grieves him that ye should perish: ardently anxious is he over you: to the Believers is he most kind and merciful.(1379)

1379 The tender heart of the Teacher is grieved that any among his flock should rush headlong to ruin. He watches ardently over them, and whenever any of them show signs of Faith, his kindness and mercy surround him and rejoice over him.

129. But if they turn away, Say: "(Allah) sufficeth me: there is no god but He: On Him is my trust,- He the Lord of the Throne (of Glory) Supreme!"(1380)

1380 But if the Message is rejected, he still proclaims the burning Faith of his heart, which is unquenchable, Allah is All in All. To trust Him is to find the accomplishment of all spiritual desire. His grandeur is figured by a lofty Throne, supreme in glory!

Thus have we been led, through a notable incident in al Mustafa's earthly career, to truths of the highest spiritual import, *(Cf.* 23:86).



10. Yunus (Jonah)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A.L.R.(1381) These are the Ayat(1382) of the Book of Wisdom.

1381 For the Abbreviated Letters generally as mystic Symbols, see Appendix I. For this particular combination see the Introduction to this Surah.

1382 *Ayat* = Signs, or Verses of the Qur'an. Here both meanings are to be understood- Each verse is a nugget of wisdom. And in the verses immediately following, *e.g.,* 10:3-6, examples are given of the wonders of Allah's material Creation. If the starry heavens impress us with their sublimity as signs of Allah's wisdom and power, how much more wonderful is it that He should speak to lowly man through His Messengers, in man's language, so that he can understand?

2. Is it a matter of wonderment to men that We have sent Our inspiration to a man from among themselves?-(1383) that he should warn mankind (of their danger), and give the good news to the Believers that they have before their Lord the lofty rank of Truth.(1384) (But) say the Unbelievers: "This is indeed an evident sorcerer!"

1383 Is it not still more wonderful that the inspired man should be one of ourselves? The Arabs had known Muhammad in other relations and conditions, and when the mighty Message came through his mouth-the message of Wisdom and Power, such as no man could speak as from himself, least of all a man not instructed in human learning—they could only in their wonder attribute it to magic and sorcery. They failed to understand that magic and sorcery were projections of their own mind, while here was solid, enduring Truth from Allah!

1384 Allah's Message was and is not all smooth and agreeable. The first thing is to convince us of our sin and wrongdoing, and warn us of our danger. If we have Faith, we then learn what a high rank we obtain in the sight of Allah, through His glorious Truth, which makes us pure and free. According to another view the word *"qadama" here* refers to the fact that the acts of a person precede him to his Lord. The word *sidq* qualifies these acts with sincerity and genuineness. (R).

3. Verily your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six Days,(1385) then He established Himself(1386) on the Throne(of authority), Regulating and governing all things. No intercessor (can plead with Him) except after His leave (hath been obtained). This is Allah your Lord; Him therefore serve ye: will ye not then be of warned?(1387)

1385 See note 1031 to 7:54.

1386 *Istawa,* with the preposition *il a* after it, means He turned to or He directed Himself by His will; hence, in 2:29,1 have translated, "His design comprehended the heavens," to emphasise the fact that the heavens were not eternal or co-eternal with Him, but were a part of His design, and in a sense, as they appear to man subjectively, a complement to the creation of man's Earth. With the preposition *'ala* after it, as here and in 7:54, 23:28, and 25:59, the meaning seems to be "to mount or ascend," and to be firmly established, to sit firm and unshaken, beyond question" *(Cf.* 20:5 *)* . The Throne of authority represents many ideas: *e.g.,* (1) that Allah is high above all His Creation; (2) that He regulates and governs it, as a king does, whose authority is unquestionably recognised; (3) that He is not, therefore, like the gods of Greece and paganism, who were imagined to be in a world apart, careless of mankind, or jealous of mankind, but on the contrary, He (4) disposes of their affairs and all affairs continuously and with justice; (5) that the authority of His prophets, ministers, and messengers is derived from Him, and such intercession as they can make is by His will and permission. (R).

1387 *Cf.* 6:80.

4. To Him will be your return- of all of you. The promise of Allah is true and sure.(1388) It is He Who beginneth the process of Creation,(1389) and repeateth it, that He may reward with justice those who believe and work righteousness; but those who reject Him will have draughts(1390) of boiling fluids, and a penalty grievous, because they did reject Him.

1388 *Haqq.* true, right, for just ends, in right proportions, sure and certain: all these ideas are implied.

1389 *Cf. n.* 120 to 2:117. Allah's creation is not a simple act, once done and finished with. It is continuous, and there are many stages, not the least important of which is the Hereafter, when the fruits of our life will be achieved.

1390 *Hamim:* boiling fluid; it is associated as in 38:57, with *ghassaq,* a dark, murky, or intensely cold fluid: both symbols of the grievous penalty that results from rebellion against Allah.

5. It is He Who made the sun to be a shining glory(1391) and the moon to be a light (of beauty), and measured out stages for her; that ye might know the number of years and the count (of time). Nowise did Allah create this but in truth and righteousness.(1392) (Thus) doth He explain His Signs in detail, for those who understand.(1393)

1391 The fitting epithet for the sun is *diya',* "splendour and glory of brightness", and for the moon is "a light" (of beauty), the cool light that illuminates and helps in the darkness of the night. But the sun and moon also measure time. The simplest observation can keep pace with the true lunar months and lunar years, which are all that is required by a pastoral people. For agriculture solar years are required, as they indicate the changes of the seasons, but ordinary solar years are never exact; even the solar year of 365 1/4 days requires correction by advanced astronomical calculation.

1392 Everything in Allah's creation has use and purpose, and fits into a Design. It is true in every sense of the word and it is good and just. It is not merely a matter of sport or freak (21:16). Though so varied, it proclaims Allah's Unity; though a limited free will is granted to creatures, the results of evil (which is rebellion) are neutralised and harmony is restored. *Cf.* 3:191.

1393 *Cf.* 9:11.

6. Verily, in the alternation of the night and the day, and in all that Allah hath created, in the heavens and the earth, are signs for those who fear Him.(1394)

1394 *Cf.* 2:164.

7. Those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, but are pleased and satisfied with the life of the present, and those who heed not Our Signs,-(1395)

1395 Those who fall from Grace are described by three epithets: (1) the meeting with Allah is not the object of their hope and earnest desire, but something else, *viz.* (2) the material good of this world, which not only attracts them but apparently gives them complete satisfaction, so that there is no glow of the Future in their horizon, and (3) they are deaf and dead to the resounding and living Message of Allah. (1) and (2) refer to the extinction of Faith in them, and (3) to their falling prey to the evils of this world in their conduct. They are contrasted in 10:9 with the Faith and the Righteousness of those who accept Grace.

8. Their abode is the Fire, because of the (evil) they earned.

9. Those who believe, and work righteousness,- their Lord will guide them because of their Faith:(1396) beneath them will flow rivers in gardens of bliss.

1396 Their Faith is the cause as well as the instrument of their Guidance—the Kindly Light which leads them as well as the Joy which fills their Soul. The usual symbols of Gardens and Fire are again contrasted—in each case the result of Good or Evil in Life.

10. (This will be) their cry therein: "Glory to Thee, O Allah." And "Peace" will be their greeting therein! and the close of their prayer(1397) will be: "Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds!"

1397 A beautiful piece of spiritual melody! They sing and shout with joy, but their joy is in the Glory of Allah! The greetings they receive and the greetings they give are of Peace and Harmony! From first to last they realise that it is Allah Who cherished them and made them grow, and His rays are their Light, *(Cf.* 36:58).

11. If Allah were to hasten for men the ill (they have earned) as they would fain hasten on the good,- then would their respite be settled at once.(1398) But We leave those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, in their trespasses, wandering in distraction to and fro.

1398 Those who have no spiritual hope for the Future grasp at any temporary advantage, and in their blindness even mockingly ask for immediate punishment for their sins (8:32), thus vainly challenging Allah, in Whom they do not believe. If the beneficent Allah were to take them at their word, they would have no chance at all. Their doom would be sealed. But even the respite they get they use badly. They merely wander about distractedly like men, to and fro. *Cf.* 2:15 .

12. When trouble toucheth a man, He crieth unto Us (in all postures)- lying down(1399) on his side, or sitting, or standing. But when We have solved his trouble, he passeth on his way as if he had never cried to Us for a trouble that touched him! thus do the deeds of transgressors seem fair in their eyes!(1400)

1399 Not only do men fail to use their respite: even those who have a superficial belief in Allah call on Him in their trouble but forget Him when He has relieved their trouble. Their Faith is not strong enough to make them realise that all good proceeds from Allah. But in moments of trouble they use every position, literally and figuratively, to appeal to Him, *(Cf.* 39:8).

1400 Those without Faith are selfish, and are so wrapped up in themselves that they think every good that comes to them is due to their own merits or cleverness. That is itself a cause of their undoing. They do not see their own faults, *(Cf.* 30:33 and 16:53 -54).

13. Generations before you We destroyed when they did wrong: their messengers came to them with clear-signs, but they would not believe! thus do We requite those who sin!

14. Then We made you heirs in the land after them, to see how ye would behave!(1401)

1401 This is addressed to Quraysh in the first instance, for they have succeeded to the heritage of 'Ad and Thamud. But the application is universal, and was true to the Abbasi Empire in the time of Harun al Rashid, or the Muslim Empire in Spain or the Turkish Empire in its palmiest days, and indeed, apart from political power, to the Muslims and non-Muslims of our own days.

15. But when Our Clear Signs are rehearsed unto them, those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, Say: "Bring us a Reading(1402) other than this, or change this," Say: "It is not for me, of my own accord, to change it: I follow naught but what is revealed unto me: if I were to disobey my Lord, I should myself fear the penalty of a Great Day (to come)."

1402 *Reading ,* in the Arabic, the word is *"Qur'an",* which may mean Reading or in the special sense, the Qur'an. The duty of Allah's Messenger is to deliver Allah's Message as it is revealed to him, whether it please or displease those who hear it. Selfish men want to read their own desires or fancies into religious precepts, and thus they are often willing to use Religion for their own ends. Most of the corruptions of Religion are due to this cause. But Religion is not to be so prostituted.

16. Say: "If Allah had so willed, I should not have rehearsed it to you, nor would He have made it known to you.(1403) A whole life-time before this have I tarried amongst you: will ye not then understand?"(1404)

1403 It is in Allah's Plan that He should reveal Himself in certain ways to His creatures, and His Messengers are the instruments that carry out His Will. It is in itself gracious Mercy that He should thus make His Will known. We should be grateful for His guidance instead of carping at it.

1404 Muhammad al Mustafa had lived his whole life of purity and virtue amongst his people, and they knew and acknowledged it before he received his mission. They knew he loved his nation and was loyal to it, Why should they turn against him when he had to point out under inspiration all their sins and wrongdoing? It was for their own good. And he had to plead again and again with them: "Will you not understand,

Kind see what a glorious privilege it is for you to receive true guidance from Allah?"

17. Who doth more wrong than such as forge a lie against Allah, or deny His Signs? But never will prosper those who sin.

18. They serve, besides Allah, things that hurt them not nor profit them, and they say: "These are our intercessors with Allah." Say: "Do ye indeed inform Allah of something He knows not, in the heavens(1405) or on earth?- Glory to Him! and far is He above the partners they ascribe (to Him)!"

1405 When we shut our eyes to Allah's glory and goodness, and go after false gods, we give some plausible excuse to ourselves, such as that they will intercede for us. But how can sticks and stones intercede for us? And how can men intercede for us, when they themselves have need of Allah's Mercy? Even the best and noblest cannot intercede as of right, but only with His permission (10:3). To pretend that there are other powers than Allah is to invent lies and to teach Allah. There is nothing in heaven or earth that He does not know, and there is no other like unto Him.

19. Mankind was but one nation,(1406) but differed (later). Had it not been for a Word(1407) that went forth before from thy Lord, their differences would have been settled between them.

1406 *Cf.* 2:213. All mankind was created one, and Allah's Message to mankind is in essence one, the Message of Unity and Truth. But as selfishness and egotism got hold of man, certain differences sprang up between individuals, races, and nations, and in His infinite Mercy He sent them messengers and messages to suit their varying mentality, to test them by His gifts, and stir them up to emulation in virtue and piety (5:48).

1407 *Cf.* 6:115, 9:40 , and 4:171. "Word" is the Decree of Allah, the expression of His Universal Will or Wisdom in a particular case. When men began to diverge from one another (see last note). Allah made their very differences subserve the higher ends by increasing their emulation in virtue and piety, and thus pointing back to the ultimate Unity and Reality, (see also 20:129). (R).

20. They say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "The Unseen is only for Allah (to know), then wait ye: I too will wait with you."(1408)

1408 Their demand for a Sign is disingenuous. All nature and revelation furnishes them with incontestable Signs. What they want is the Book of the Unseen opened out to them like the physical leaves of a book. But they forget that a physical Book is on a wholly different plane from Allah's Mysteries, and that their physical natures cannot apprehend the mysteries. They must wait. Truth will also wait. But the waiting in two cases is in quite different senses. (*Cf.* 6:158 and 9:52).

21. When We make mankind taste of some mercy after adversity hath touched them, behold! they take to plotting against Our Signs! Say: "Swifter to plan is Allah." Verily, Our messengers record all the plots that ye make!(1409)

1409 Man turns his thoughts in adversity to Allah. But as soon as the trouble is past, he not only forgets Him but actually strives against His cause. But such people are poor ignorant creatures, not realising that the Universal Plan of Allah is swifter to stop their petty plans, and that though they fail, the record of them remains eternally against them. (R).

22. He it is Who enableth you to traverse through land and sea; so that ye even board ships;- they sail with them with a favourable wind, and they rejoice thereat; then comes a stormy wind and the waves come to them from all sides, and they think they are being overwhelmed: they cry unto Allah, sincerely offering (their) duty unto Him saying, "If thou dost deliver us from this, we shall truly show our gratitude!"(1410)

1410 All the great inventions and discoveries on which man prides himself are the fruit of that genius and talent which Allah has freely given of His grace. But the spirit of man remains petty, as is illustrated by the parable from the sea. How the heart of man rejoices when the ship goes smoothly with favourable winds! How in adversity it turns, in terror and helplessness, to Allah, and makes vows for deliverance! and how those vows are disregarded as soon as the danger is past! *Cf.* 6:63.

23. But when he delivereth them, behold! they transgress insolently through the earth in defiance of right! O mankind! your insolence(1411) is against your own souls,- an enjoyment of the life of the present: in the end, to Us is your return, and We shall show you the truth of all that ye did.

1411 In our insolence and pride we do not see how small and ephemeral is that part of us which is mortal. We shall see it at last when we appear before our Judge. In the meantime our ridiculous pretensions only hurt ourselves, (*Cf.* 17:67-69).

24. The likeness of the life of the present is as the rain which We send down from the skies:(1412) by its mingling arises the produce of the earth- which provides food for men and animals: (It grows) till the earth is clad with its golden ornaments and is decked out (in beauty): the people to whom it belongs think they have all powers of disposal over it: There reaches it Our command by night or by day, and We make it like a harvest clean-mown, as if it had not flourished only the day before! thus do We explain the Signs in detail for those who reflect.

1412 Another beautiful Parable, explaining the nature of our present life. The rain comes down in drops and mingles with the earth. Through it, by Allah's matchless artistry, the womb of the earth is made fruitful. All kinds of good, useful, and beautiful grains, vegetables, and fruits are produced for men and animals. The earth is covered in its bravery of green and gold and all kinds of colours. Perhaps the "owner" takes all the credit to himself, and thinks that this will last eternally. A hailstorm or blast, a frost or a volcanic eruption, comes and destroys it, or it may be even normally, that the time of harvest comes, and the fields and orchards are stripped bare by some blight or disease. Where is the beauty and braver}' of yesterday? All that is left is dust and ashes! What more can we get from this physical material life?

25. But Allah doth call to the Home of Peace:(1413) He doth guide whom He pleaseth to a way that is straight.

1413 (*Cf.* 6:127). In contrast with the ephemeral and uncertain pleasures of this material life, there is a higher life to which Allah is always calling. **It** is called the Home of Peace. For there is no fear, nor disappointment nor sorrow there. And all are called, and those will be chosen who have sought, not material advantages, but the Good Pleasure of Allah. *Salam,* Peace, is from the same root as Islam, the Religion of Unit)' and Harmony.

26. To those who do right is a goodly (reward)- Yea, more (than in measure)!(1414) No darkness nor shame shall cover their faces!(1415) they are companions of the garden; they will abide therein (for aye)!

1414 The reward of the righteous will be far more than in proportion to their merits. For they will have the supreme bliss of being near to Allah, and "seeing His face". (R).

1415 The face is the symbol of the Personality, the inner and real Self, which is the antithesis of the outer and ephemeral Self. It will be illuminated with Allah's Light, behind which is no shadow or darkness. All its old shortcomings will be blotted out, with their sense of shame, for there will be Perfection, as in Allah's sight.

27. But those who have earned evil will have a reward of like evil:(1416) ignominy will cover their (faces): No defender will they have from (the wrath of) Allah. Their faces will be covered, as it were, with pieces from the depth of the darkness(1417) of night: they are companions of the Fire: they will abide therein (for aye)!

1416 Note that the evil reward is for those who have "earned" evil, *i.e.,* brought it on themselves by the deliberate choice of evil. Further, in the justice of Allah, they will be requited with evil similar to, and not greater in quantity or intensity, than the evil they had done - unlike the good, who, in Allah's generosity, get a reward far greater than anything they have earned or could possibly earn.

1417 Night is the negation of Light and metaphorically of joy and felicity. The intensive is indicated by "the depth of the darkness of Night."

28. One day shall We gather them all together. Then shall We say to those who joined gods (with Us): "To your place! ye and those ye joined as ´partners´ We shall separate them, and their "Partners" shall say: "It was not us that ye worshipped!(1418)

1418 The false gods are not real: they are only the figments of the imaginations of those who indulged in the false worship. But the prophets or great or good men whose names were vainly taken in competition with the name of Allah, and the personified Ideas or Idols treated in the same way would themselves protest against their names being used in that way, and show that the worship was paid not to them, but to the ignorance or superstition or selfish lusts of the false worshippers, *(Cf.* 19:81-82, 28:63, and 35:14).

29. "Enough is Allah for a witness between us and you: we certainly knew nothing of your worship of us!"(1419)

1419 See last note. They did not even know that they were being falsely worshipped in that way.

30. There will every soul prove (the fruits of) the deeds it sent before(1420): they will be brought back to Allah their rightful Lord, and their invented falsehoods will leave them in the lurch.(1421)

1420 *Cf.* 2:95, where the verb used is *qaddama.* The verb *aslafa,* used here, is nearly synonymous.

1421 Instead of their false ideas helping them, they will desert them and leave them in the lurch. *Cf.* 6:24 .

31. Say: "Who is it that sustains you (in life) from the sky and from the earth?(1422) or who is it that has power over hearing(1423) and sight? And who is it that brings out the living from the dead and the dead from the living?(1424) and who is it that rules and regulates all affairs?"(1425) They will soon say, "(Allah)". Say, "will ye not then show piety (to Him)?"

1422 Sustenance may be understood in the sense of all the provision necessary for maintaining physical life as well as mental and spiritual development and well-being. Examples of the former are light and rain from heaven and the produce of the earth and facilities of movement on land and sea and in air. Examples of the latter are the moral and spiritual influences that come from our fellow-men, and from the great Teachers and Prophets.

1423 Just two of our ordinary faculties, hearing and sight, are mentioned, as examples of the rest. All the gifts of Allah, physical and spiritual, are enjoyed and incorporated by us by means of the faculties and capacities with which He has endowed us.

1424 *Cf.* 3:27 and n. 371; 6:36 , 6:95 and n. 920, 30:19, and 36:12.

1425 This is the general summing-up of the argument. The government of the whole Creation and its maintenance and sustenance is in the hands of Allah. How futile then would it be to neglect His true worship and go after false gods?

32. Such is Allah, your real Cherisher and Sustainer: apart from truth, what (remains) but error?(1426) How then are ye turned away?

1426 The wonderful handiwork and wisdom of Allah having been referred to, as the real Truth, as against the false worship and false gods that men set up, it follows that to disregard the Truth must lead us into woeful wrong, not only in our beliefs but in our conduct. We shall err and stray and be lost. How then can we turn away from the Truth? *(Cf.* 40:69).

33. Thus is the word of thy Lord proved true(1427) against those who rebel: Verily they will not believe.

1427 Disobedience to Allah brings its own terrible consequences on ourselves. The Law, the Word, the Decree, of Allah must be fulfilled. If we go to false gods, our Faith will be dimmed, and then extinguished. Our spiritual faculties will be dead.

34. Say: "Of your ´partners´,(1428) can any originate creation and repeat it?" Say: "It is Allah Who originates creation and repeats it: then how are ye deluded away (from the truth)?"

1428 The argument is now turned in another direction. The false gods can neither create out of nothing nor sustain the creative energy which maintains the world. Nor can they give any guidance which can be of use for the future destiny of mankind: on the contrary they themselves (assuming they were men who were deified) stand in need of such guidance. Why then follow vain fancies, instead of going to the source of all knowledge, truth, and guidance, and worship, serve, and obey Allah, the One True God?

35. Say: "Of your ´partners´ is there any that can give any guidance towards truth?" Say: "It is Allah Who gives guidance towards truth, is then He Who gives guidance to truth more worthy to be followed, or he who finds not guidance (himself) unless he is guided? what then is the matter with you? How judge ye?"

36. But most of them follow nothing but fancy: truly fancy can be of no avail against truth. Verily Allah is well aware of all that they do.

37. This Qur´an is not such as can be produced by other than Allah. on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it, and a fuller explanation of the Book(1429) - wherein there is no doubt - from the Lord of the worlds.

1429 *The Book: Cf.* 3:23 and n. 366. Allah's revelation throughout the ages is one. The Qur'an confirms, fulfils, completes, and further explains the one true revelation, which has been sent by the One True God in all ages.

38. Or do they say, "He forged it"? say: "Bring then a Sura like unto it, and call (to your aid) anyone you can besides Allah, if it be ye speak the truth!"(1430)

1430 *Cf.* 2:23 and n. 42, 11:13 , and 52:33-34.

39. Nay, they charge with falsehood that whose knowledge they cannot compass, even before the elucidation thereof(1431) hath reached them: thus did those before them make charges of falsehood: but see what was the end of those who did wrong!(1432)

1431 *Ta'wil:* elucidation, explanation, final fulfilment, *Cf.,* 7:53 . The Message of Allah not only gives us rules of our everyday conduct, but speaks of high matters of religions significance, which require elucidation in three ways: (1) by instruction from Teachers of great spiritual experience, (2) by experience from the actual facts of life, and (3) by the final fulfilment of the hopes and warnings which we now take on trust through our Faith. The Unbelievers reject Allah's Message simply because they cannot understand it and without giving it even a chance of elucidation in any of these ways. (R).

1432 Wrongdoers always came to grief ultimately. The true course of history shows it from a broad standpoint. But they are so headstrong that they prejudge issues in their ignorance before they are decided.

40. Of them there are some who believe therein, and some who do not: and thy Lord knoweth best those who are out for mischief.

41. If they charge thee with falsehood, say: "My work to me, and yours to you!(1433) ye are free from responsibility for what I do, and I for what ye do!"

1433 When the Prophet of Allah is rejected and charged with falsehood, he does not give up his work, but continues to teach and preach his Message. He can well say to those who interfere with him: "Mind your own business: supposing your charge against me is true, you incur no responsibility: I have to answer for it before Allah: and if I do my duty and deliver my Message, your rejection does not make me liable for your wrongdoing; you will have to answer before Allah."

42. Among them are some who (pretend to) listen to thee: But canst thou make the deaf to hear,- even though they are without understanding?(1434)

1434 *Cf.* 6:25, 36, 39 and notes. Hypocrites go to hear and see some great Teacher, but they get no profit out of it because they are not sincerely seeking the truth. They are like the blind, or the deaf, or the imbeciles. It is impossible to guide them, because they have not the will to be guided.

43. And among them are some who look at thee: but canst thou guide the blind,- even though they will not see?

44. Verily Allah will not deal unjustly with man in aught: It is man that wrongs his own soul.(1435)

1435 Allah cannot be blamed for man's evil, nor will He deal unjustly with man. He has given him faculties and means of guidance. If man goes wrong, it is because he wrongs himself.

45. One day He will gather them together: (It will be) as if they had tarried(1436) but an hour of a day: they will recognise each other:(1437) assuredly those will be lost who denied the meeting with Allah and refused to receive true guidance.

1436 In eternity our life on this earth will look as if it had been just a little part of our little day, and so also will appear any interval between our death and the call to J udgement, *(Cf.* 16:77).

1437 We shall retain some perception of our mutual relations on earth, so that the righteous judgement which will be pronounced will be intelligible to us, and we shall be convinced of its righteousness.

46. Whether We show thee (realised in thy life-time) some part of what We promise them,- or We take thy soul (to Our Mercy) (Before that),- in any case, to Us is their return: ultimately Allah is witness,(1438) to all that they do.

1438 The Prophet is assured that the end of evil is evil, just as the end of good is good. Whether this result is made plain before his very eyes in his own lifetime or afterwards, makes no difference. The wicked should not rejoice if they are given rope and seem to have the upper hand for a time, nor should the righteous lose heart: for Allah's promise is sure and must come to pass. And in any case, the scales can only be partially, if at all, adjusted in this life. There is the final and complete adjustment on the Day of Judgement. Allah is All-Knowing, and all truth will be before Him, *(Cf.* 40:77).

47. To every people (was sent) a Messenger: when their Messenger(1439) comes (before them), the matter will be judged between them with justice, and they will not be wronged.

1439 Every people or generation or nation had its Message or Messenger *(Cf.* n. 668 and 16:36 , and 35:24): Allah revealed Himself to it in some way or another. If that Messenger was ignored or rejected, or his Message was twisted or misused, the Day of Reckoning will come, when perfect justice will be done and the whole Truth revealed. The Unbelievers mockingly say: "If that is true, pray tell us when that Day will come!" The answer of the Messenger is: "It will come in good time: no one can either hasten or retard it. If you want me then to save you or if you fear that I shall harm you for your treatment of me, know that this matter is in the hands of Allah alone, Who will do perfect justice. Even in regard to myself, any harm or good that befalls me is by the command and in the power of Allah."

48. They say: "When will this promise come to pass,- if ye speak the truth?"

49. Say: "I have no power(1440) over any harm or profit to myself except as Allah willeth. To every People(1441) is a term appointed: when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay, nor (an hour) can they advance (it in anticipation)."

1440 *Cf.* 7:188.

1441 This repeats 7:34 , but the significance is different in the two contexts. Here the reply is to the Unbelievers' mocking incredulity (seen n. 1439) as to whether there is such a thing as a Hereafter: they suggest to the Prophet of Allah that if his claim to inspiration from Allah is true, he should get them punished at once for rejecting him. In 7:34 the reference is to the punishment of iniquity as described in 7:33 : sin is not necessarily punished at once: every People or generation gets a chance; when their term is fulfilled, the final adjustment is made.

50. Say: "Do ye see,- if His punishment should come to you by night or by day,(1442) what portion of it would the sinners wish to hasten?

1442 The mockery of Unbelievers will be turned into panic when the wrath of Allah descends on them. It may do so suddenly, by night or by day, when they least expect it. Will they then say of any bit of it: "Let it be hastened"?

51. "Would ye then believe in it at last, when it actually cometh to pass? (It will then be said): ´Ah! now? and ye wanted (aforetime) to hasten it on!´

52. "At length will be said to the wrong-doers: ´Taste ye the enduring punishment!(1443) ye get but the recompense of what ye earned!´"

1443 This will be the final doom, and they will themselves have brought it on themselves!

The psychology of the Unbelievers is here analysed and exposed. This particular argument begins at 10:47 and ends at 10:53 . It begins with the general statement that every People has had due warning and explanation by means of a Prophet specially sent to them; that Prophet will be a relevant witness at the final Judgement, when the matter will be judged in perfect equity. Then follows a dialogue- The Unbelievers mock and say, "Why not bring on the Punishment now?" The reply to the Unbelievers is, "It will come in Allah's good time". The Believers are told to watch and see how the sinners would take it if the Punishment were to come at once. Would they not think it too sudden? When it actually comes, their panic will be indescribable. "Is that true?" say the Unbelievers. "It is the very truth," is the answer, "and nothing can ward it off."

53. They seek to be informed by thee: "Is that true?" Say: "Aye! by my Lord! it is the very truth! and ye cannot frustrate it!"

54. Every soul that hath sinned, if it possessed all that is on earth, would fain give it in ransom:(1444) They would declare (their) repentance(1445) when they see the penalty: but the judgment between them will be with justice, and no wrong will be done unto them.

1444 *Cf.* 3:91, and 13:18 .

1445 *Declare their repentance:* the verb in the original is *asarru,* which may mean either "declare" or "reveal" or else "conceal" or "hide". The classical Commentators are divided as to the meaning to be adopted here. If the first, which I prefer, the sense would be: "When the Penalty stares the sinners in the face, they would give anything to escape it, and they would even openly declare their repentance, which would be a source of shame and ignominy to them." If the latter meaning be taken, the sense would be: "They would give anything to escape the Penalty; but the hardest thing of all for them is frankly to confess and repent, and so they conceal their sense of shame and ignominy", *(Cf.* 34:33).

55. Is it not (the case) that to Allah belongeth whatever is in the heavens and on earth? Is it not (the case) that Allah.s promise is assuredly true? Yet most of them understand not.

56. It is He Who giveth life and who taketh it, and to Him shall ye all be brought back.

57. O mankind! there hath come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing for the (diseases)(1446) in your hearts,- and for those who believe, a guidance and a Mercy.

1446 Those who do wrong have a disease in their hearts, which will cause their spiritual death. Allah in His Mercy declares His Will to them, which should direct their lives and provide a healing for their spiritual disease. If they accept Faith, the remedy acts; they find themselves in right guidance and receive Allah's forgiveness and mercy. Surely those are far better gifts than material advantages, wealth, or possessions, *(Cf.* n. 2989).

58. Say: "In the bounty of Allah. And in His Mercy,- in that let them rejoice": that is better than the (wealth) they hoard.

59. Say: "See ye what things(1447) Allah hath sent down to you for sustenance? Yet ye hold forbidden some things thereof and (some things) lawful." Say: "Hath Allah indeed permitted you, or do ye invent (things) to attribute to Allah."

1447 "Sustenance" is to be taken in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. In the literal sense, what fine and varied things Allah has provided for us on land and in sea and air, in the vegetable, animal, and mineral kingdoms? Yet narrow minds put artificial barriers against their use. In the metaphorical sense, what enchanting fields of knowledge and spiritual endeavour are provided in our individual and social lives? And who is to say that some are lawful and others forbidden? Supposing they were so in special circumstances, it is not right to attribute artificial restrictions of that kind to Allah and falsely erect religious sanctions against them.

60. And what think those who invent lies against Allah, of the Day of Judgment?(1448) Verily Allah is full of bounty to mankind, but most of them are ungrateful.(1449)

1448 People who lie in Religion or invent false gods, or false worship—have they any idea of the Day of Judgement, when they will be called to account, and will have to answer for their deeds?

1449 Allah is most kind, and gracious, and generous with His gifts of all kinds, material and spiritual. But men do not understand, and are ungrateful in forgetting the Giver of all and setting up false objects of worship and false standards of pride.

61. In whatever business thou mayest be, and whatever portion thou mayest be reciting from the Qur´an,- and whatever deed ye (mankind) may be doing,- We are witnesses thereof when ye are deeply engrossed therein. Nor is hidden from thy Lord (so much as) the weight of an atom on the earth or in heaven. And not the least and not the greatest of these things but are recorded in a clear Record.(1450)

1450 There is nothing that men can do but Allah is a witness to it. We may be deeply engrossed in some particular thing and for the time being be quite unconscious of other things. But Allah's knowledge not only comprehends all things, but has all things actively before it. Nothing is hidden from Him. And His knowledge has another quality which human knowledge has not. Human knowledge is subject to time, and is obliterated by time. Allah's knowledge is like a Record and endures forever. And His Record has a further quality which human records have not. The most permanent human record may be quite intelligible to those who make it but may be ambiguous to others and may become unintelligible with the progress of time, as happens almost invariably to the most enduring inscriptions from very ancient times: but in Allah's "Record" or knowledge there is no ambiguity, for it is independent of time, or place, or circumstance. This is the force of *Mubin* ("clear") here.

62. Behold! verily on the friends of Allah there is no fear,(1451) nor shall they grieve;

1451 Allah's all-embracing knowledge and constant watchful care over all His creatures, maybe a source of fear to sinners, but there is no fear for those whom He honours with His love and friendship - neither in this world nor in the world to come.

63. Those who believe and (constantly) guard against evil;-

64. For them are glad tidings, in the life of the present and in the Hereafter; no change can there be in the words of Allah. This is indeed the supreme felicity.

65. Let not their speech(1452) grieve thee: for all power and honour belong to Allah. It is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things).

1452 Sometimes the words of the unrighteous or their revilings hurt or grieve the righteous man, but there is no occasion for either anger or sorrow: they have no power and they can do no real dishonour, for all power and honour are from Allah.

66. Behold! verily to Allah belong all creatures, in the heavens and on earth. What do they follow who worship as His "partners" other than Allah. They follow nothing but fancy, and they do nothing but lie.(1453)

1453 All creatures are subject to Allah. If, therefore, any false worship is set up, the false gods-so called "partners"-are merely creatures of imagination or false inventions.

67. He it is That hath made you the night that ye may rest therein, and the day to make things visible (to you).(1454) Verily in this are signs for those who listen (to His Message).

1454 Our physical life-and our higher life in so far as it is linked with the physical-is sustained by the alternation of rest and activity, and the fit environment for this alternation is the succession of Nights and Days in our physical world. The Day makes the things "visible to us"-a beautiful symbol, not only of the physical work for which we go about by day, but of the higher activities which are fitly associated with seeing, perception and inquiry. Intuition (insight) is a little out of that circle because that may come by night, when our other faculties are resting.

68. They say: "(Allah) hath begotten a son!" - Glory be to Him! He is self- sufficient! His are all things in the heavens and on earth! No warrant have ye for this! say ye about Allah what ye know not?

69. Say: "Those who invent a lie against Allah will never prosper."(1455)

1455 In Qur'anic language "prosperity" refers both to our everyday life and to the higher life within us—to the Present and the Future—health and strength, opportunities and resources, a spirit of contentment and the power of influencing others. Here there seems to be an extra touch of meaning. A liar not only deprives himself of prosperity in all senses, but his "lie" itself against Allah will not succeed: it will and must be found out.

70. A little enjoyment in this world!- and then, to Us will be their return, then shall We make them taste the severest penalty for their blasphemies.

71. Relate to them the story(1456) of Noah. Behold! he said to his people: "O my people, if it be hard on your (mind) that I should stay (with you) and commemorate the signs of Allah,- yet I put my trust in Allah. Get ye then an agreement about your plan and among your partners, so your plan(1457) be on to you dark and dubious. Then pass your sentence on me, and give me no respite.

1456 The reference to Noah's story here is only incidental, to illustrate a special point. The fuller story will be found in 11:25 -49, and in many other passages, *e.g.,* 7:59 -64, 26:105-122, and 37:75-82. At each place there is a special point in the context. The special point here is that Noah's very life and preaching among his wicked people was a cause of offence to them. But he feared nothing, trusted in Allah, delivered his message, and was saved from the Flood.

1457 Finn in his sense of Truth from Allah, Noah plainly told his people to condemn him to death if they liked, openly and in concert, so that he should at

least know who would listen to his Message and who would not. He wanted them to be frank and direct, for he feared nothing.

72. "But if ye turn back, (consider): no reward have I asked(1458) of you: my reward is only due from Allah, and I have been commanded to be of those who submit to Allah.s will (in Islam)."

1458 The Prophet of Allah preaches for the good of his people. He claims no reward from them; but, on the contrary, is reviled, persecuted, banished, and often slain, *(Cf.* 34:47 and 36:21).

73. They rejected Him, but We delivered him, and those with him, in the Ark, and We made them inherit (the earth), while We overwhelmed in the flood those who rejected Our Signs.(1459) Then see what was the end of those who were warned (but heeded not)!

1459 *Cf.* 7:62-64.

74. Then after him We sent (many) messengers to their peoples: they brought them Clear Signs, but they would not believe what they had already rejected(1460) beforehand. Thus do We seal the hearts of the transgressors.

1460 I understand the meaning to be that there is a sort of spiritual influence descending from generation to generation, among the Unbelievers as among the men of Faith. In history we find the same spiritual problems in many ages-denial of Allah's grace, defiance of Allah's law, rejection of Allah's Message. These influences cause the hearts of the contumacious to be sealed and impervious to the Truth. *Cf.* 2:7 and notes. What they do is to prejudge the issues even before the Prophet explains them, (see also 6:46).

75. Then after them sent We Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh(1461) and his chiefs with Our Signs. But they were arrogant: they were a people in sin.

1461 The story of Moses, Aaron, and Pharaoh is fully told in 7:103-137, and there are references to it in many places in the Qur' an. The incidental reference here is to illustrate a special point, *viz.,* that the wicked are arrogant and bound up in their sin, and prefer deception to Truth: they do not hesitate to charge the men of Allah, who work unselfishly for them, with mean motives, such as would actuate them in similar circumstances!

76. When the Truth did come to them from Us, they said: "This is indeed evident sorcery!"

77. Said Moses: "Say ye (this) about the truth when it hath (actually) reached you? Is sorcery (like) this? But sorcerers will not prosper."(1462)

1462 Sorcery is the very opposite of Truth—being deception of plausible shows by the powers of evil. But these cannot succeed or last permanently, and Truth must ultimately prevail.

78. They said: "Hast thou come to us to turn us away from the ways we found our fathers following,- in order that thou and thy brother may have greatness in the land?(1463) But not we shall believe in you!"

1463 Notice how they attribute evil motives to the men of Allah, motives of ambition and lust for power, which the men of Allah had been sent expressly to put down. The same device was used against Al Mustafa.

79. Said Pharaoh: "Bring me every sorcerer well versed."

80. When the sorcerers came, Moses said to them: "Throw ye what ye (wish) to throw!"

81. When they had had their throw,(1464) Moses said: "What ye have brought is sorcery: Allah will surely make it of no effect: for Allah prospereth not the work of those who make mischief.

1464 When they threw their rods, the rods became snakes by a trick of sorcery, but Moses's miracles were greater than any tricks of sorcery, and had real Truth behind them.

82. "And Allah by His Words(1465) doth prove and establish His truth, however much the sinners may hate it!"

1465 Allah's Words or Commands have real power, while sorcerer's tricks only seem wonderful by deceiving the eye.

83. But none believed in Moses except some children of his People,(1466) because of the fear of Pharaoh and his chiefs, lest they should persecute them; and certainly Pharaoh was mighty on the earth and one who transgressed all bounds.

1466 The pronoun "his" in "his People" is taken by some Commentators to refer to Pharaoh. The majority of Pharaoh's people refused to believe at the time, but the sorcerers believed (7:120-122), and so did Pharaoh's wife (66:11), and ultimately Pharaoh himself, though too late (10:90). If we took "his" to refer to Moses, it would mean that the Israelites were hardhearted and grumbled (7:129) even when they were being delivered from Egypt, and only a few of them had any real faith in Allah's providence and the working of His Law, and they feared Pharaoh even more than they feared Allah.

84. Moses said: "O my people! If ye do (really) believe in Allah, then in Him put your trust if ye submit (your will to His)."

85. They said: "In Allah do we put out trust. Our Lord! make us not a trial for those(1467) who practise oppression;

1467 *A trial for those who practise oppression:* the various meanings of *Fitnah* have been explained in n. 1198 to 8:25. The prayer is that the righteous people, being weak, should be saved from being used as objects of oppression or punishment at the hands of powerful enemies. Weakness tempts power to practise oppression, and is thus an occasion of trial for the oppressors.

86. "And deliver us by Thy Mercy from those who reject (Thee)."

87. We inspired Moses and his brother with this Message: "Provide(1468) dwellings for your people in Egypt, make your dwellings into places of worship, and establish regular prayers: and give glad tidings to those who believe!"

1468 This instruction, we may suppose, was given when the sorcerers were brought to confusion, and some of the Egyptians believed. Moses was for a little while to remain in Egypt , so that his Message should have time to work, before the Israelites were led out of Egypt . They were to make their houses into places of prayer *(Qiblah),* as Pharaoh would not probably allow them to set up public places of prayer, and they were now to be only sojourners in Egypt . The *Qiblah* was to be symbolical of their later wanderings in Arabia , and the still later restoration of Allah's pure worship at the Ka'bah under al Mustafa. These were the glad tidings (the Gospel) of Islam, which was preached under Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, and completed under Muhammad.

88. Moses prayed: "Our Lord! Thou hast indeed bestowed on Pharaoh and his chiefs splendour and wealth in the life(1469) of the present, and so, Our Lord, they mislead (men) from Thy Path. Deface our Lord, the features of their wealth,(1470) and send hardness to their hearts, so they will not believe until they see the grievous penalty."

1469 Moses's prayer, in which Aaron joined, for he was always with him, may be paraphrased thus: "O Allah! we understand that the glitter and the wealth of the Egyptians are not to be envied. They are but the ephemeral goods of this life. They are a disadvantage, in that in their pride of possessions the Egyptians mislead themselves and others. Let their pride be their undoing! Turn their wealth into bitterness and their hearts into hardness, for they reject Thee, and they will not believe until they actually see the Punishment of their sins!"

1470 A terrible curse! Let their wealth and splendour become so defaced in their features, that instead of being objects of desire, they become objects of loathing! The heart is the seat of affections and joy: let it be so hardened by their unbelief that it becomes the seat of hatred and grief! It is when they see the Penalty that they will believe!

89. Allah said: "Accepted is your prayer (O Moses and Aaron)! So stand ye straight, and follow not the path of those who know not."(1471)

1471 Be not dazzled by their splendour, but stand out straight for Truth, for that is your salvation! Addressed in form to Moses and Aaron, in substance it is addressed to the Israelites.

90. We took the Children of Israel across the sea: Pharaoh and his hosts followed them in insolence and spite.(1472) At length, when overwhelmed with the flood, he said: "I believe that there is no god except Him Whom the Children of Israel believe in:(1473) I am of those who submit (to Allah in Islam)."

1472 Notice the swiftness of the action in the narrative. The execution of poetic justice could not have been described in fewer words.

1473 That is, in the One True God. This was deathbed repentance, and even so it was forced by the terror of the catastrophe. So it was not accepted *(Cf.* 4:18) in its entirety. Only this concession was made, that the body was saved from the sea, and presumably, according to Egyptian custom, it was embalmed and the mummy was given due rites of the dead. But the story commemorated forever Allah's working, in mercy for His people, and in just punishment of oppressors.

91. (It was said to him): "Ah now!- But a little while before, wast thou in rebellion!- and thou didst mischief (and violence)!

92. "This day shall We save thee in the body, that thou mayest be a sign to those who come after thee! but verily, many among mankind are heedless of Our Signs!"

93. We settled the Children of Israel in a beautiful(1474) dwelling-place, and provided for them sustenance of the best: it was after knowledge had been granted to them, that they fell into schisms. Verily Allah will judge between them as to the schisms amongst them, on the Day of Judgment.

1474 After many wanderings the Israelites were settled in the land of Canaan , described as "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod. 3:8). They had a prosperous land; and they were supplied with spiritual sustenance by men sent to deliver Allah's Message. They should have known better than to fall into disputes and schisms, but they did so. This was all the more inexcusable considering what bounties they had received from Allah. The schisms arose from selfish arrogance, and Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgement, *(Cf.* 45:17).

94. If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee:(1475) the Truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord: so be in no wise of those in doubt.(1476)

1475 Allah's Truth is all one, and even in different forms men sincere in Religion recognise the oneness. So sincere Jews like 'Abd Allah ibn Salam, and sincere Christians like Waraqah or the Nestorian monk Bahirah, were ready to recognise the mission of Muhammad al Mustafa. "The Book" in this connection is Revelation generally, including pre-Islamic revelations.

1476 *Cf.* 3:60 and n. 399.

95. Nor be of those who reject the signs of Allah, or thou shalt be of those who perish.

96. Those against whom the word of thy Lord hath been verified(1477) would not believe-

1477 Allah has given frequent warnings against Evil and want of Faith in all ages, through Signs and through inspiration-the latter ("the Word") being even more direct and personal than the former. Those who did not heed the warning found to their cost that it was true, and they perished. Such contumacy in the rejection of Truth only yields when the actual penalty is in sight. Belief then is induced by irresistible facts: it is not efficacious as Faith, as was proved against Pharaoh. See 10:90 and n. 1473.

97. Even if every Sign was brought unto them,- until they see (for themselves) the penalty grievous.

98. Why was there not a single township (among those We warned), which believed,- so its faith should have profited it,- except the People(1478) of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the penalty of ignominy in the life of the present, and permitted them to enjoy (their life) for a while.(1479)

1478 Allah in His infinite Mercy points out the contumacy or Sin as a warning, and the exceptional case of Nineveh and its Prophet Jonah is alluded to. The story of Jonah is told in 37:139-148, which would be an appropriate place for further comments (*Cf. n.* 2744). Here it is sufficient to note that Nineveh was a very ancient town which is now no longer on the map. Its site is believed to be marked by the two mounds on the left bank of the Tigris, opposite the flourishing city of Mosul on the right bank, about 230 miles north-northwest of Baghdad . One of the mounds bears the name of the "the Tomb of Nabi Yunus." Archaeologists have not yet fully explored its antiquities, but it is clear that it was a very old Sumerian town, perhaps older than 3500 B.C. It became the capital of Assyria . The first Assyrian Empire under Shalmanester I, about 1300 B.C., became the supreme power in Western Asia . Babylon , whose tributary Assyria had formerly been, now became tributary to Assyria . The second Assyrian Empire arose about 745 B.C., and Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) beautified the town with many public works. It was destroyed by the Scythians (so-called Medes) in 612 B.C. If the date of Jonah were assumed to be about 800 B.C., it would be between the First and Second Assyrian Empire; when the City was nearly destroyed for its sins, but on account of its repentance was given a new lease of glorious life in the Second Empire .

1479 The point of the allusion here may be thus explained: Nineveh was a great and glorious City; but it became, like Babylon , a city of sin. Allah sent the prophet Yunus (Jonah) to warn it. Full of iniquities though it was, it listened to the warning, perhaps in the person of a few just men. For their sakes, the All-Merciful Allah spared it, and gave it a new lease of glorious life. According to the chronology in the last note the new lease would be for about two centuries, after which it perished completely for its sins and abominations. Note that its new lease of life was for its collective life as a City, the life of the Present, *i.e.,* of this World. It does not mean that individual sinners escaped the spiritual consequences of their sin, unless they individually repented and obtained Allah's mercy and forgiveness.

99. If it had been thy Lord´s will, they would all have believed,- all who are on earth! wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!(1480)

1480 If it had been Allah's Plan or Will not to grant the limited Free Will that He has granted to man, His omnipotence could have made all mankind alike: all would then have had Faith, but that Faith would have reflected no merit on them. In the actual world as it is, man has been endowed with various faculties and capacities, so that he should strive and explore, and bring himself into harmony with Allah's Will. Hence Faith becomes a moral achievement, and to resist Faith becomes a sin. As a complementary proposition, men of Faith must not be impatient or angry if they have to contend against Unfaith, and most important of all, they must guard against the temptation of forcing Faith, *i.e.,* imposing it on others by physical compulsion, or any other forms of compulsion such as social pressure, or inducements held out by wealth or position, or other adventitious advantages. Forced faith is no faith. They should strive spiritually and let Allah's Plan work as He wills.

100. No soul can believe, except by the will of Allah,(1481) and He will place Doubt(1482) (or obscurity) on those who will not understand.

1481 To creatures endued with Will, Faith comes out of an active use of that Will. But we must not be so arrogant as to suppose that that is enough. At best, man is weak and in need of Allah's grace and help. If we sincerely wish to understand, He will help our Faith; but if not, our doubts and difficulties will only be increased. This follows as a necessary consequence, and in Qur'anic language all consequences are ascribed to Allah, the Cause of Causes.

1482 *Rijs* (from *rajisa, yarjisu,* or *rajasa, yarjasu)* has various meanings: *e.g.,* (1) filth, impurity, uncleanness, abomination, as in 9:95; (2) hence, filthy deeds, foul conduct, crime, abomination, thus shading off into (1), as in 5:90; (3) hence punishment for crime, penalty, as in 6:125; (4) a form of such punishment, *viz.,*

doubt, obscurity, or unsettlement of mind, anger, indignation, as in 9:125, and here, but perhaps the idea of punishment is also implied here.

101. Say: "Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth"; but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not.(1483)

1483 If Faith results from an active exertion of our spiritual faculties or understanding, it follows that if we let those die, Allah's Signs in His Creation or in the spoken Word which comes by inspiration through the mouths of His Messengers will not reach us any more than music reaches a deaf man.

102. Do they then expect (any thing) but (what happened in) the days of the men who passed away before them? Say: "Wait ye then: for I, too, will wait with you."(1484)

1484 *Cf.* 10:20 and n. 1408. The argument about Allah's revelation of Himself to man was begun in those early sections of this Surah and is being now rounded off towards the end of this Surah with the same formula, (see also 11:93).

103. In the end We deliver Our messengers and those who believe: Thus is it fitting on Our part that We should deliver those who believe!

104. Say: "O ye men! If ye are in doubt as to my religion, (behold!)(1485) I worship not what ye worship, other than Allah. But I worship Allah - Who will take your souls(1486) (at death): I am commanded(1487) to be (in the ranks) of the Believers,(1488)

1485 Other people may hesitate, or doubt, or wonder. But the righteous man has no doubt in his own mind, and he declares his Faith clearly and unambiguously to all, as did al Mustafa.

1486 The worship of the One and True God is not a fancy worship, to be arrived at merely by reasoning and philosophy. It touches the vita! issues of life and death, which are in His hands and His alone.

1487 Nor is the worship of One God an invention of the Prophet. It comes as a direct command through him and to all.

1488 Individual Faith is good, but it is completed and strengthened by joining or forming a Righteous Society, in which the individual can develop and expand. Islam was never a religion of monks and anchorites. It laid great stress on social duties, which in many ways test and train the individual's character.

105. "And further (thus): ´set thy face towards religion with true piety, and never in any wise be of the Unbelievers;

106. "´Nor call on any, other than Allah.- Such will neither profit thee nor hurt thee: if thou dost, behold! thou shalt certainly be of those who do wrong.´"

107. If Allah do touch thee with hurt, there is none can remove it but He: if He do design some benefit for thee, there is none can keep back His favour: He causeth it to reach whomsoever of His servants He pleaseth. And He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.(1489)

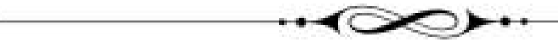
1489 Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Even when we suffer under trials and tribulations, it is for our good, and no one can remove them except He, when, in His Plan, He sees it to be best for all concerned. On the other hand, there is no power that can intercept His blessings and favours, and His bounty flows freely when we are worthy, and often when we are not worthy of it.

108. Say: "O ye men! Now Truth hath reached you from your Lord! those who receive guidance, do so for the good of their own souls; those who stray, do so to their own loss: and I am not (set) over you to arrange your affairs."(1490)

1490 The *Furqan,* the Criterion between right and wrong, has been sent to us from Allah. If we accept guidance, it is not as if we confer favours on those who bring us guidance. They suffer unselfishly for us, in order that we may be guided for our own good. On the other hand, if we reject it, it is our own loss, We have a certain amount of free will, and the responsibility is ours and cannot be shifted to the Teachers sent I by Allah.

109. Follow thou the inspiration sent unto thee, and be patient and constant, till Allah do decide: for He is the best to decide.(1491)

1491 When, in spite of all the efforts of the Prophets of Allah, people do not accept Truth, and evil seems to flourish for time, we must wait and be patient, but at the same time we must not give up hope or persevering effort. For thus only can we carry out our part in the Plan of Allah.



11. Hud (The Prophet Hud)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A. L. R.(1492) (This is) a Book, with verses basic or fundamental(1493) (of established meaning), further explained in detail,- from One Who is Wise and Well-acquainted (with all things):

1492 For the meaning of these Letters, see Introduction to S. 10.

1493 See n. 347 to 3:7. Every basic principle is included in Allah's Revelation, and it is further illustrated and explained in detail.

2. (It teacheth) that ye should worship none but Allah. (Say): "Verily I am(1494) (sent) unto you from Him to warn and to bring glad tidings:

1494 Al Mustafa's Message-as was the Message of all prophets-was to warn against evil, and to bring the glad tidings of Allah's Mercy and Grace to all who would receive it in Faith and trust in Allah. This double Message is preached illustratively in this Surah.

3. "(And to preach thus), ´Seek ye the forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him in repentance; that He may grant you enjoyment, good (and true), for a term appointed, and bestow His abounding grace on all who abound in merit!(1495) But if ye turn away, then I fear for you the penalty of a great day:

1495 The enjoyment of all good and true things in life refers, I think, to the present life with its limited term, and the abounding Grace refers to the higher spiritual reward, which begins here but is completed in the life to come.

4. ´To Allah is your return, and He hath power over all things.´"

5. Behold! they fold up(1496) their hearts, that they may lie hid from Him! Ah even when they cover themselves with their garments, He knoweth what they conceal, and what they reveal: for He knoweth well the (inmost secrets) of the hearts.(1497)

1496 The heart (literally *breast* in Arabic) is already well-guarded in the body; and secrets are supposed to be hidden in the heart or breast. Foolish persons might further cover up their hearts with cloaks, but even so, nothing can be hidden from Allah.

1497 *Cf.* 3:119.

6. There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance(1498) dependeth on Allah. He knoweth the time and place of its definite abode and its temporary deposit:(1499) All is in a clear Record.(1500)

1498 *Cf.* 6:59. Nothing happens in Creation except by the Word of Allah and with the knowledge of Allah. Not a leaf stirs but by His Will. Its maintenance in every sense is dependent on His Will.

1499 *Mustaqarr*= definite abode; where a thing stops or stays for some time, where it is established. *Mustawda'* = where a thing is laid up or deposited for a little while. Referring to animals, the former denotes its life on this earth; the latter its temporary prenatal existence in the egg or the womb and its after-death existence in the tomb or whatever state it is in until its resurrection.

1500 *Cf.* 6:59 and n. 880, and 10:61 and n. 1450.

7. He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days(1501) - and His Throne was over the Waters - (1502) that He might try you,(1503) which of you is best in conduct. But if thou wert to say to them, "Ye shall indeed be raised up after death", the Unbelievers would be sure to say,(1504) "This is nothing but obvious sorcery!"

1501 Seen. 1031 to 7:54.

1502 It is scientifically correct to say that all life was evolved out of the waters, and this statement also occurs in the Qur'an, 21:30. Some such meaning, I think, also attaches to the Gen. 1:2. The past tense "was" refers to the time before life developed in solid farms, on land and in air. (R).

1503 The Creation we see around us is not idle sport or play (in Hindi, *Lila)* or whim on the part of Allah. It is the medium through which our spiritual life is to develop, with such free will as we have. This life is our testing time.

1504 The Unbelievers, who do not believe in a Future life, think all talk of it is like a sorcerer's talk, empty of reality. But in this they show their ignorance, and they are begging the question.

8. If We delay the penalty for them for a definite term, they are sure to say, "What keeps it back?"(1505) Ah! On the day it (actually) reaches them, nothing will turn it away from them, and they will be completely encircled by that which they used to mock at!

1505 As much as to say: "Oh! all this talk of punishment is nonsense. There is no such thing!"

9. If We give man a taste of Mercy from Ourselves, and then withdraw it from him, behold! he is in despair and (falls into) blasphemy.(1506)

1506 He does not realise that some kinds of chastening are good for discipline and the training of our spiritual faculties.

10. But if We give him a taste of (Our) favours after adversity hath touched him, he is sure to say, "All evil has departed from me:"(1507) Behold! he falls into exultation and pride.

1507 He takes it as a matter of course, or as due to his own merit or cleverness! He does not realise that both in good and ill fortune there is a beneficent purpose in the Plan of Allah.

11. Not so do those who show patience and constancy, and work(1508) righteousness; for them is forgiveness (of sins) and a great reward.

1508 Their attitude is the right one: to take ill fortune with fortitude and good fortune with humility, and in either case go on persevering in good deeds to their fellow creatures.

12. Perchance thou mayest (feel the inclination) to give up a part of what is revealed(1509) unto thee, and thy heart feeleth straitened lest they say, "Why is not a treasure sent down unto him, or why does not an angel come down with him?" But thou art there only to warn! It is Allah that arrangeth all affairs!

1509 Every Prophet of Allah, when he not only encounters opposition, but is actually accused of falsehood and those very evils which he is protesting against, may feel inclined, in his human weakness, to ask himself the question, "Supposing I omit this little point, will Allah's Truth then be accepted more readily?" Or he may think to himself, "If I had only more money to organise my campaign, or something which will draw people's attention, like the company of an angel, how much better can I push my Message?" He is told that truth must be delivered as it is revealed, even though portions of it may be unpalatable, and that resources and other means to draw people to him are beside the point. He must use just such resources and opportunities as he has, and leave the rest to Allah.

13. Or they may say, "He forged it," Say, "Bring ye then ten suras forged, like unto it, and call (to your aid) whomsoever ye can, other than Allah.- If ye speak the truth!(1510)

1510 *Cf.* 2:23 , 10:38 , 17:88, and 52:33-34.

14. "If then they (your false gods) answer not your (call), know ye that this revelation is sent down (replete) with the knowledge of Allah, and that there is no god but He! will ye even then submit (to Islam)?"

15. Those who desire the life of the present and its glitter,- to them we shall pay (the price of) their deeds therein,- without diminution.(1511)

1511 If worldly men desire the glitter of this world, they shall have it in full measure, but it is false glitter, and it involves the negation of that spiritual life which comes from the guidance of the inner light and from the revelation of Allah, as described in verse 17 below.

16. They are those for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but the Fire: vain are the designs they frame therein, and of no effect and the deeds that they do!

17. Can they be (like) those who accept a Clear (Sign) from their Lord, and whom a witness from Himself(1512) doth teach, as did the Book of Moses before it,- a guide(1513) and a mercy? They believe therein; but those of the Sects that reject it,- the Fire will be their promised meeting-place. Be not then in doubt thereon: for it is the truth from thy Lord: yet many among men do not believe!

1512 "A *witness from Himself", i.e.,* the Book which was given to al Mustafa, the Holy Qur'an, which is compared to the original Revelation given to Moses. We make no difference between one true and genuine Message and another, nor between one prophet and another—for they all come from the One True God.

1513 "Guide": the Arabic word here is *Imam,* a leader, a guide, one that directs to the true Path. Such a direction is an instance of the Mercy and Goodness of Allah to man. The Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad are also called, each, a Guide and a Mercy, and so are these epithets applicable to previous Books and Prophets.

18. Who doth more wrong than those who invent a life against Allah. They will be turned back to the presence of their Lord, and the witnesses will say, "These are the ones who lied against their Lord! Behold! the Curse of Allah is on those who do wrong!-

19. "Those who would hinder (men) from the path of Allah and would seek in it something crooked: these were they who denied the Hereafter!"(1514)

1514 *Cf.* 7:45 and 14:3,

20. They will in no wise frustrate (His design) on earth, nor have they protectors besides Allah. Their penalty(1515) will be doubled! They lost the power to hear, and they did not see!

1515 *Cf. 7:38 .* In this context, it is implied that they committed a twofold wrong: (1) in inventing falsehoods against Allah, which deadened their own soul, and (2) in leading others astray or hindering them from Allah's path. Thus they lost the faculty of hearing, which they might have used to hear the Word of Allah, and they

blinded the faculty of sight by shutting out Allah's light, (see also 25:69 and 33:68).

21. They are the ones who have lost their own souls: and the (fancies) they invented have left them in the lurch!

22. Without a doubt, these are the very ones who will lose most in the Hereafter!

23. But those who believe and work righteousness, and humble themselves before their Lord,-(1516) They will be companions of the gardens, to dwell therein for aye!

1516 Note that the humility is to be "before their Lord," *i.e.,* in Allah's sight. There is no virtue, quite the contrary, in rubbing our noses to the ground before men. We are not to be arrogant even before men because we are humble as in Allah's sight. Nor does true humility lose self-confidence: for that self-confidence arises from confidence in the support and help of Allah.

24. These two kinds (of men) may be compared to the blind and deaf, and those who can see and hear well. Are they equal when compared? Will ye not then take heed?

25. We sent Noah to his people (with a mission): "I have come to you with a Clear Warning:

26. "That ye serve none but Allah. Verily I do fear for you the penalty of a Grievous Day."(1517)

1517 Noah's mission was to a wicked world, plunged in sin. The mission had a double character, as in the mission of all Prophets of Allah: it had to warn men against evil and call them to repentance, and it had to give them the glad tidings of Allah's Grace in case they turned back to Allah: it was a Guidance and Mercy.

27. But the chiefs of the Unbelievers among his people said: "We see (in) thee nothing but a man like ourselves: Nor do we see that any follow thee but the meanest among us, in judgment immature: Nor do we see in you (all) any merit above us: in fact we thing ye are liars!"(1518)

1518 The Unbelievers were impelled by three powerful human motives of evil to resist Grace: (1) jealousy of other men; they said, "Why, you are no better than ourselves;" half perceiving the Prophet's superiority, and half ignoring it; (2) contempt of the weak and lowly, who are often better intellectually, morally, and spiritually; they said, "We cannot believe or do what these fellows, our inferiors in social rank, believe or do!"; (3) arrogance and self-sufficiency, which is a vice cognate to (2), looked at from a different angle; they said, "We are really better than the lot of you!" Now the claim made on behalf of Allah's Message attacked all these three attitudes. And all they could say against it was to abuse it impatiently, and call it a lie.

28. He said: "O my people! See ye if (it be that) I have a Clear Sign from my Lord, and that He hath sent Mercy unto me from His own presence, but that the Mercy hath been obscured from your sight?(1519) shall we compel you to accept it when ye are averse to it?

1519 Noah's answer (like that of the Prophet of Allah who spoke in later ages in Makkah and Madinah) is a pattern of humility, gentleness, firmness, persuasiveness, truth, and love for his own people. First, he meekly (not exultingly) informs them that he has got a Message from Allah. Secondly, he tells them that it is a Message of Mercy even in its warning, though in their arrogance the Mercy may be hidden from them. Thirdly, he tells them plainly that there can be no compulsion in Religion: but will they not accept with goodwill what is for their own benefit? He pleads with them as one of their own.

29. "And O my people! I ask you for no wealth in return: my reward is from none but Allah.(1520) But I will not drive away (in contempt) those who believe: for verily they are to meet their Lord, and ye I see are the ignorant ones!

1520 The fourth point in Noah's address meets their accusation that he was a liar, implying that he was serving some selfish end of his own: on the contrary, he says, he seeks no reward from them but will bear any insults they heap on him, for he looks to Allah rather than men. But, fifthly if they insult the poor and needy who come to him in Faith, and think that he would send them away in order to attract the great ones of the land, he tells them plainly that they are mistaken. In fact, (sixthly), he has no hesitation in telling the blunt truth that *they* are the ignorant ones, and not the poor who came to seek Allah's Truth!

30. "And O my people! who would help me against Allah if I drove them away? Will ye not then take heed?(1521)

1521 But (seventhly) again he pleads, with as much earnestness as ever, that he is one of themselves, and just doing his truest duty. Would they have him do less? Indeed, would they not themselves see the Truth and come into the goodly company of Believers?

31. "I tell you not that(1522) with me are the Treasures(1523) of Allah, nor do I know what is hidden, nor claim I to be an angel. Nor yet do I say, of those whom your eyes do despise(1524) that Allah will not grant them (all) that is good: Allah knoweth best what is in their souls: I should, if I did, indeed be a wrong-doer."

1522 The eighth point that Noah urges is that he is not a mere vulgar soothsayer pretending to reveal secrets not worth knowing, nor an angel living in another world, with no ties to them. He is their real well-wisher, delivering a true Message from Allah.

1523 *Cf.* 6:50 and n. 867.

1524 But Noah will not close his argument without defending the men of Faith, whom the Chiefs despise because they are lacking in worldly goods. He tells them plainly that Allah perhaps sees in them something in which they, the arrogant Chiefs, are lacking. Their spiritual faculties can only be appreciated truly by Him to Whom all the secrets of the spirit are open. But he, Noah, must declare boldly his own Faith, and this is the ninth point in his argument.

32. They said: "O Noah! thou hast disputed with us, and (much) hast thou prolonged the dispute with us: now bring upon us what thou threatenest us with, if thou speakest the truth!?"(1525)

1525 To Noah's address the worldly Chiefs give a characteristic reply. In its aggressive spirit it is the very antithesis of the gentle remonstrances of Noah.

Because he had gently and patiently argued with them, they impatiently accuse him of "disputing with them" and "prolonging the dispute". They are unable to deal with his points. So they arrogantly throw out their challenge, which is a compound of hectoring insolence, unreasoning skepticism, and biting irony. "You foretell disaster to us if we don't mend our ways! Let us see you bring it on! Now, if you please! Or shall we have to call you a liar?"

33. He said: "Truly, Allah will bring it on you if He wills,- and then, ye will not be able to frustrate it!(1526)

1526 To the blasphemous challenge addressed to Noah his only answer could be: "I never claimed that I could punish you. All punishment is in the hands of Allah, and He knows best when His punishment will descend. But this I can tell you! His punishment is sure if you do not repent, and when it comes, you will not be able to ward it off!"

34. "Of no profit will be my counsel to you, much as I desire to give you (good) counsel, if it be that Allah willeth to leave you astray:(1527) He is your Lord! and to Him will ye return!"

1527 But Noah's heart bleeds for his people. They are preparing their own undoing! All his efforts are to be vain! Obstinate as they are, Allah's grace must be withdrawn, and then who can help them, and what use is any counsel? But again he will try to remind them of their Lord, and turn their face to Him. For their ultimate return to His Judgement Seat is certain, to answer for their conduct.

35. Or do they say, "He has forged it"? Say: "If I had forged it, on me were my sin! and I am free of the sins of which ye are guilty!(1528)

1528 'The fine narrative of dramatic power is here interrupted by a verse which shows that the story of Noah is also a parable for the time and the ministry of Muhammad, the Prophet. The wonderful force and aptness of the story cannot be denied. The enemy therefore turns and says, "Oh! but you invented it!" The answer is, "No! but it is Allah's own truth! You may be accustomed to dealing in falsehoods, but I protest that T am free from such sins." The place of this verse here corresponds to the place of verse 49 at the end of the next Section. While understanding this verse to refer to al Mustafa, as most of the accepted Commentators understand it, it is possible also, I think, to read it into the story of Noah, for all Prophets have similar spiritual experiences.

36. It was revealed to Noah: "None of thy people will believe(1529) except those who have believed already! So grieve no longer over their (evil) deeds.

1529 The story of Noah is resumed. A point was reached, when it was clear that there was no hope of saving the sinners, who were courting their own destruction. It was to be a great Flood. So Noah was ordered to construct a great Ark or Ship, not a sailing ship, but a heavy vessel to remain afloat in the Flood, so that the righteous could be saved in it.

37. "But construct an Ark under Our(1530) eyes and Our inspiration, and address Me no (further) on behalf of those who are in sin: for they are about to be overwhelmed (in the Flood)."

1530 It was to be built under the special instructions of Allah, to serve the special purpose it was intended to serve.

38. Forthwith he (starts) constructing the Ark: Every time that the chiefs of his people passed by him, they threw ridicule on him.(1531) He said: "If ye ridicule us now, we (in our turn) can look down on you with ridicule likewise!(1532)

1531 The ridicule of the sinners, from their own point of view, was natural. Here was a preacher turned carpenter! Here was a plain in the higher reaches of the Mesopotamian basin, drained by the majestic Tigris, over 800 to 900 miles from the sea (the Persian Gulf) in a straight line! Yet he talks of a flood like the Sea! All material civilisations pride themselves on their Public Works and their drainage schemes. And here was a fellow relying on Allah! But did not their narrow pride seem ridiculous also to the Prophet of Allah! Here were men steeped in sin and insolence! And they pit themselves against the power and the promise of Allah! I Truly a contemptible race is man!

1532 The Arabic Aorist may be construed either by the present tense or the future tense, and both make good sense here. Following Zamakhshari, I construe in the present tense, because the future is so tragic for the sinners. For the time being the worldly ones looked down on the Believers as they always do; but the Believers relied on Allah, and pitied their critics for knowing no better!-for their arrogance was really ridiculous.

39. "But soon will ye know who it is on whom will descend a penalty that will cover them with shame,- on whom will be unloosed a penalty lasting:"

40. At length, behold! there came Our command, and the fountains of the earth(1533) gushed forth! We said: "Embark therein, of each kind two, male and female,(1534) and your family - except those against whom the word has already gone forth,-(1535) and the Believers." but only a few believed with him.

1533 *Far al tannur.* Two interpretations have been given: (1) the fountains or the springs on the surface of the earth bubbled over or gushed forth; or (2) the oven (of Allah's Wrath) boiled over. The former has the weight of the best authority behind it and I prefer it. Moreover, the same phrase occurs in 23:27 , where it is a clause coordinated (as here) with the coming of Allah's Command. These two passages may be compared with 54:11-12, where it is said that water poured forth from the skies and gushed forth from the springs. This double action is familiar to anyone who has seen floods on a large scale. The rain from above would saturate the great Ararat Plateau, and give great force to the springs and fountains in the valley of the Tigris below.

1534 *Zawjayn:* the dual number refers to the two individuals in each pair of opposite sexes. Some of the most authoritative Commentators *(e.g.,* Imam Razi) construe it in this sense, though others construe it to mean two pairs of each species.

1535 A disobedient and recalcitrant son (or step-son or grandson) of Noah is mentioned below (11:42 -43, 45-46). A member of the family, who breaks away from the traditions of the family in things that matter, ceases to share in the privileges of the family.

41. So he said: "Embark ye on the Ark, In the name of Allah, whether it move or be at rest! For my Lord is, be sure, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!"

42. So the Ark floated with them on the waves (towering) like mountains,(1536) and Noah called out to his son, who had separated himself (from the rest): "O my son! embark with us, and be not with the unbelievers!"

1536 The simile of mountains applies to the waves, which were mountain high- literally, for the peaks were being submerged.

43. The son replied: "I will betake myself to some mountain:(1537) it will save me from the water." Noah said: "This day nothing can save, from the command of Allah, any but those on whom He hath mercy! "And the waves came between them, and the son was among those overwhelmed in the Flood.

1537 The Unbelievers refuse to believe in Allah, but have great faith in material things! This young man was going to save himself on mountain peaks, not knowing that the peaks were themselves being submerged.

44. Then the word went forth:(1538) "O earth! swallow up thy water, and O sky! Withhold (thy rain)!" and the water abated, and the matter was ended. The Ark rested on Mount(1539) Judi, and the word went forth: "Away with those who do wrong!"

1538 A wonderful passage. The whole picture is painted in just a few words. The chain of material facts are linked together, not only in their relations to each other, but also in their relation to the spiritual forces (hat control them, and the spiritual consequences of Sin and wrongdoing. The drowning in the material sense was the last part of the Penalty. A whole new world came into existence after the Deluge. (R).

1539 Let us get a little idea of the geography of the place. The letters JiM, Ba', and Kaf are philologically interchangeable, and J udi, Gudi", Kudi are sounds that can pass into each other. There is no doubt that the name is connected with the name "Kurd", in which the letter ris a later interpolation, for the oldest Sumerian records name a people called Kuti or Gutu as holding the middle Tigris region not later

than 2000 B.C. (see E.B., Kurdistan). That region comprises the modern Turkish district of Bohtan, in which Jabal Judi is situated (near the frontiers of modern Turkey , modern Iraq , and modern Syria), and the town of Jazirah ibn 'Umar, (on the present Turco-Syrian frontier), and it extends into Iraq and Iran . The great mountain mass of the Ararat plateau dominates this district. This mountain system "is unique in the Old World in containing great sheets of water that are bitter lakes without outlets, Lake Van and Lake Urumiya being the chief (E.B., Asia). Such would be the very region for a stupendous Deluge if the usual scanty rainfall were to be changed into a very heavy downpour. A glacier damming of Lake Van in the Ice Age would have produced the same result. The region has many local traditions connected with Noah and the Flood. The Biblical legend of Mount Ararat being the resting place of Noah's Ark is hardly plausible, seeing that the highest peak of Ararat is over 16,000 feet high. If it means one of the lower peaks of the Ararat system, it agrees with the Muslim tradition about Mount Judi (or Gudi), and this is in accordance with the oldest and best local traditions. These traditions are accepted by J osephus, by the Nestorian Christians, and indeed by all the Eastern Christians and Jews, and they are the best in touch with local traditions. See (Viscount) J Bryce. " *Transcaucasia and Ararat"* 4th ed., 1896, p. 216.

45. And Noah called upon his Lord, and said: "O my Lord! surely my son is of my family! and Thy promise is true, and Thou art the justest of Judges!"

46. He said: "O Noah! He is not of thy family:(1540) For his conduct is unrighteous. So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge! I give thee counsel, lest thou act like the ignorant!"

1540 See n. 5135 above. Like all Prophets of Allah, Noah was kind-hearted, but he is told that there can be no compromise with evil. And Noah acknowledges the reproof. There was a wife of Noah, who was also an unbelieving woman (66:10), and she suffered the fate of Unbelievers.

47. Noah said: "O my Lord! I do seek refuge with Thee, lest I ask Thee for that of which I have no knowledge. And unless thou forgive me and have Mercy on me, I should indeed be lost!"(1541)

1541 Noah, in his natural affection and respect for ties of relationship, was overcome with human weakness in wishing to reverse the law of spiritual Justice. It was not sin but ignorance. His ignorance was corrected by divine inspiration, and he immediately saw the full Truth, acknowledged his error, and asked for Allah's forgiveness and mercy. This is the standard set for us all.

48. The word came: "O Noah! Come down (from the Ark) with peace from Us, and blessing on thee and on some of the peoples (who will spring) from those with thee: but (there will be other) peoples to whom We shall grant their pleasures(1542) (for a time), but in the end will a grievous penalty reach them from Us."(1543)

1542 *Cf.* 2:126.

1543 Those who truly seek Allah's light and guidance and sincerely bend their will to His Will are freely admitted to Allah's grace. Notwithstanding any human weaknesses in them, they are advanced higher in the spiritual stage on account of their Faith, Trust, and Striving after Right. They are given Allah's Peace, which gives the soul true calmness and strength, and all the blessings that flow from spiritual life. This was given not only to Noah and his family but to all the righteous people who were saved with him. And their descendants were also promised those blessings on condition of righteousness. But some of them fell from grace, as we know in history. Allah's grace is not a social or family privilege. Each people and each individual must earnestly strive for it and earn it.

49. Such are some of the stories of the unseen, which We have revealed unto thee: before this, neither thou nor thy people knew them. So persevere patiently: for the End is for those who are righteous.(1544)

1544 *Cf.* n. 1528 to 9:35. The sum of the whole matter is that the righteous, who work for Allah and their fellow-men, may be traduced, insulted, and persecuted. But they will be sustained by Allah's Mercy. They must go on working patiently, for the End will all be for them and their Cause.

50. To the ´Ad People (We sent) Hud, one of their own brethren. He said: "O my people! worship Allah. ye have no other god but Him.(1545) (Your other gods) ye do nothing but invent!

1545 *Cf.* the story of Hud the Messenger to the 'Ad People, in 7:65-72. There the argument was how other Peoples treated their prophets as the Makkans were treating al Mustafa. Here we see another point emphasised: the insolence of 'Ad in obstinately adhering to false gods after the true God had been preached to them, Allah's long-suffering grace to them, and finally Allah's justice in bringing them to book while the righteous were saved.

The locality in which 'Ad flourished is indicated in n. 1040 to 7:65.

51. "O my people! I ask of you no reward for this (Message). My reward is from none but Him who created me: Will ye not then understand?

52. "And O my people! Ask forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him (in repentance): He will send you the skies(1546) pouring abundant rain, and add strength to your strength:(1547) so turn ye not back in sin!"

1546 The beautiful metaphor about the skies coming down with rain has been obscured unnecessarily in most translations. The country of 'Ad was an arid country, and rain was the greatest blessing they could receive. We can imagine this being said in a time of famine, when the people performed all sorts of superstitious rites and invocations instead of turning to the true God in faith and repentance. Further, when we remember that there were, in this tract in ancient times, dams like that at Ma'rib, for the storage of rain water, the effect is still further heightened in pointing to Allah's care and mercy in His dealing with men.

1547 Adding strength to strength may refer to an increase of population, as some Commentators think. While other parts of Arabia were sparsely populated, the irrigated lands of 'A d supported a comparatively dense population and added to their natural strength in the arts of peace and war. But the term used is perfectly general. They were a powerful people in their time. If they obeyed Allah and followed the law of righteousness, they would be still more powerful, for "righteousness exalteth a nation."

53. They said: "O Hud! No Clear (Sign) that hast thou brought us, and we are not the ones to desert our gods on thy word! Nor shall we believe in thee!(1548)

1548 The argument of the Unbelievers is practically this: "We are not convinced by you; we don't want to be convinced: we think you are a liar—or perhaps a fool!" (See next verse).

54. "We say nothing but that (perhaps) some of our gods may have seized thee(1549) with imbecility." He said: "I call Allah to witness, and do ye bear witness, that I am free from the sin of ascribing, to Him,

1549 See n. 1548 above. Continuing their argument, the Unbelievers make a show of making all charitable allowances for Hud, but in reality cut him to the quick by bringing in their false gods. "To be quite polite," said they, "we will not say that you are exactly a liar! Perhaps you have been touched with imbecility! Ah yes! You rail against what you call our false gods! Some of them have paid you out, and made you a fool! Ha! ha!" This mockery is even worse than their other false accusations. For it sets up false gods against the One True God, even in dealing with Hud. So Hud replies, with spirit and indignation: "At least keep Allah's name out of your futile talk! You know as well as I do, that I worship the One True God! You pretend that your false gods can smite a true Prophet of Allah! I accept the challenge. Scheme and plot against me as you may, all of you-you and your gods! See if you have any power! I ask for no quarter from you! My trust is in Allah."

55. "Other gods as partners! so scheme (your worst) against me, all of you, and give me no respite.(1550)

1550 *Cf.* 7:195 and n. 1168.

56. "I put my trust in Allah, My Lord and your Lord! There is not a moving creature, but He hath grasp of its forelock.(1551) Verily, it is my Lord that is on a straight Path.(1552)

1551 *Grasp of the forelock:* an Arabic idiom, referring to a horse's forelock. The man who grasps it has complete power over the horse, and for the horse the forelock is as it were the crown of his beauty, the sum of his power of self-assertion. So Allah's power over all creatures is unlimited and no one can withstand His decree. *Cf.* 96:15-16.

1552 That is, the standard of all virtue and righteousness is in the Will of Allah, the Universal Will that controls all things in goodness and justice. You are on a crooked Path. Allah's Path is a straight Path.

57. "If ye turn away,- I (at least) have conveyed the Message with which I was sent to you. My Lord will make another people to succeed you, and you will not harm Him(1553) in the least. For my Lord hath care and watch over all things."

1553 Hud was dealing with a people of pride and obstinate rebellion. He tells them that their conduct will only recoil on themselves. It can do no harm to Allah or in any way frustrate the beneficent Plan of Allah. He will only put some other people in their place to carry out His Plan. That Plan is referred to in the next sentence as "care and watch" over all his Creation.

58. So when Our decree issued, We saved Hud and those who believed with him, by (special) Grace(1554) from Ourselves: We saved them from a severe penalty.

1554 A few just men might suffer for the iniquities of the many. But Allah's Plan is perfect and eventually saves His own people by special Grace, if they have Faith and Trust in Him.

59. Such were the ´Ad People: they rejected the Signs of their Lord and Cherisher; disobeyed His messengers; And followed the command of every powerful, obstinate Transgressor.(1555)

1555 Instead of following the beneficent Lord who cherished them, they followed ever)' rebel against Allah's Law, if he only obtained a little power to dazzle them, *(Cf.* 14:15).

60. And they were pursued by a Curse in this life,- and on the Day of Judgment. Ah! Behold! for the ´Ad rejected their Lord and Cherisher! Ah! Behold! removed (from sight) were ´Ad the people of Hud!

61. To the Thamud People (We sent) Salih, one of their own brethren.(1556) He said: "O my people! Worship Allah. ye have no other god but Him. It is He Who hath produced you(1557) from the earth and settled you therein: then ask forgiveness of Him, and turn to Him (in repentance): for my Lord is (always) near, ready to answer."

1556 The story of Salih and the Thamud people has been told from another point of view in 7:73-79. The difference in the point of view there and here is the same as in the story of Hud: see n. 1545. to 11:50 . Note how the story now is the same, and yet new points and details are brought out to illustrate each new argument. Note, also, how the besetting sin of 'Ad—pride and obstinacy—is distinguished from the besetting sin of Thamud— the oppression of the poor, as illustrated by the test case and symbol of the she-camel: see n. 104-4 to 7:73. All sin is in a sense pride and rebellion; yet sins take particular hues in different circumstances, and these colours are brought out as in a most artistically painted picture—with the greatest economy of words and the most piercing analysis of motives. For the locality and history of Thamud, see n. 1043 to 7:73.

1557 For *Ansha* 'a as a process of creation see n. 923 to 6:98 and the further references given there. As to his body, man has been produced from earth or clay, and his settlement on earth is a fact of his material existence. Therefore we must conform to all the laws of our physical being, in order that through our life on this earth we may develop that higher Life which belongs to the other part of our being, our spiritual heritage. Through the use we make of our health, of our tilth, of our pastures, of material facts of all kinds, will develop our moral and spiritual nature.

62. They said: "O Salih! thou hast been of us! a centre of our hopes(1558) hitherto! dost thou (now) forbid us the worship of what our fathers worshipped? But we are really in suspicious (disquieting) doubt as to that to which thou invitest us."

1558 Salih's life with his people had been so righteous (like that of al Amin in later times) that he might have been chosen leader or king if he had only conformed to their superstitions and supported their sins. But he was born for a higher mission— that of a preacher of truth and righteousness and an ardent opponent of selfish privilege and a champion of the rights of humanity on Allah's free earth by the symbol of the she-camel: see n. 1044 to 7:73.

63. He said: "O my people! do ye see? if I have a Clear (Sign) from my Lord and He hath sent Mercy unto me from Himself,- who(1559) then can help me against Allah if I were to disobey Him? What then would ye add to my (portion) but perdition?

1559 "Allah has been good to me and bestowed on me His light and the inestimable privilege of carrying His mission to you. Don't you see that if I fail to carry out His mission, I shall have to answer before Him? Who can help me in that case? The only thing which you can add to my misfortunes would be total perdition in the spiritual world." *Cf.* 11:28 .

64. "And O my people! This she-camel of Allah is a symbol to you:(1560) leave her to feed on Allah's (free) earth, and inflict no harm on her, or a swift penalty will seize you!"

1560 Salih does not merely take up a negative attitude, he puts forward the she-camel as a Symbol: see n. 1044 to 8:73. "Give up your selfish monopoly. Make Allah's gifts on this free earth available to all. Give the poor their rights, including grazing rights on common lands. Show your penitence and your new attitude by leaving this she-camel to graze freely. She is a Symbol, and therefore sacred to you." But their only reply was to defy the appeal and hamstring the camel. And so they went the way of all sinners—to total perdition.

65. But they did ham-string her. So he said: "Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days:(1561) (Then will be your ruin): (Behold) there a promise not to be belied!"

1561 Just three days' time for further thought and repentance! But they paid no heed. A terrible earthquake came by night, preceded by a mighty rumbling blast (probably volcanic), such as is well-known in earthquake-prone areas. It came by night and buried them in their own fortress homes, which they thought such places of security! The morning found them lying on their faces hidden from the light How the mighty were brought low!.

66. When Our Decree issued, We saved Salih and those who believed with him, by (special) Grace from Ourselves -(1562) and from the Ignominy of that day. For thy Lord - He is the Strong One, and able to enforce His Will.

1562 *Cf.* 11:58 above and n. 1554. For *'Aziz,* see n. 2818 to 21:40 .

67. The (mighty) Blast(1563) overtook the wrong-doers, and they lay prostrate in their homes before the morning,-

1563 *Cf.* 7:78 and n. 1047-also n. 1561 above.

68. As if they had never dwelt and flourished there. Ah! Behold! for the Thamud rejected their Lord and Cherisher! Ah! Behold! removed (from sight) were the Thamud!(1564)

1564 *Cf.* 11:60 above, and 11:94-95.

69. There came Our messengers to Abraham with glad tidings. They said, "Peace!" He answered, "Peace!" and hastened to entertain them with a roasted calf.(1565)

1565 According to the sequence of Surah 7, the next reference should be to the story of Lut, and that story commences at 11:77 below, but it is introduced by a brief reference to an episode in the life of his uncle Abraham, from whose seed sprang the peoples to whom Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad al Mustafa were sent with the major Revelations. Abraham had by this time passed through the fire of persecutions in the Mesopotamian valleys; he had left behind him the ancestral idolatry of Ur of the Chaldees; he had been tried and he had triumphed over the persecution of Nimrud; he had now taken up his residence in Canaan, from which his nephew Lot (Lut) was called to preach to the wicked Cities of the Plain east of the Dead Sea which is itself called Bahr Lut Thus prepared and sanctified, he was now ready to receive the Message that he was chosen to be the progenitor of a

great line of Prophets, and the Message is now referred to, (see also 29:31-35). Can we localise Nimrud ? If local tradition in place-names can be relied upon, this king must have ruled over the tract which includes the modern Nimrud , on the Tigris, about twenty miles south of Mosul . This is the site of Assyrian ruins of great interest, but the rise of Assyria as an Empire was of course much later than the time of Abraham. The Assyrian city was called Kalakh (or Calah), and archaeological excavations carried out there have yielded valuable results, which are however irrelevant for our Commentary.

70. But when he saw their hands went not towards the (meal), he felt some mistrust of them, and conceived a fear of them.(1565-A) They said: "Fear not: We have been sent against the people of Lut."(1566)

1565-A Abraham received the strangers with a salutation of Peace, and immediately placed before them a sumptuous meal of roasted calf. The strangers were embarrassed. They were angels and did not eat. If hospitality is refused, it means that those who refuse it meditate no good to the would-be host. Abraham therefore had a feeling of mistrust and fear in his mind, which the strangers at once set at rest by saying that their mission was in the first place to help Lut as a warner to the Cities of the Plain. But in the second place they had good news for Abraham: he was to be the father of great peoples! *(Cf.* 51:24-28). (R).

1566 *The people of Lut* means the people to whom Lut was sent on his mission of warning, the people of the wicked Cities of the Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah .

71. And his wife was standing (there), and she laughed:(1567) But we gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob.

1567 The narrative is very concise, and most of the details are taken for granted. We may suppose that the angels gave the news first to Abraham, who was already, according to Gen. 21:5, a hundred years of age, and his wife Sarah was not far short of ninety (Gen. 17:7). She was probably screened. She could hardly believe the news. In her scepticism (some say in her joy) she laughed. But the news was formally communicated to her that she was to be the mother of Isaac, and through Isaac, the grandmother of Jacob. Jacob was to be a fruitful tree, with his twelve sons. But, hitherto, Abraham had had no son by her, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. "How could it be?" she thought. (R).

72. She said: "Alas for me!(1568) shall I bear a child, seeing I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man? That would indeed be a wonderful thing!"

1568 This is as much a sigh of past regrets as of future wistfulness!

73. They said: "Dost thou wonder at Allah's decree? The grace of Allah and His blessings on you, o ye people of the house!(1569) for He is indeed worthy of all praise, full of all glory!"(1570)

1569 *Ahl al bayt* = people of the house, a polite form of addressing the wife and members of the family. Blessings are invoked on the whole family.

1570 This little episode of Abraham's life comes on fitly as one of the illustrations of Allah's wonderful providence in His dealings with man. Abraham had had a tussle with his father on behalf of Truth and Unity (6:74); he had travelled to far countries, and was now ready to receive his great mission as the fountainhead of prophets in his old age. Humanly speaking it seemed impossible that he should have a son at his age, and yet it came to pass and became a cornerstone of sacred history.

74. When fear had passed from (the mind of) Abraham and the glad tidings(1571) had reached him, he began to plead with us for Lut´s people.

1571 *Glad-tidings:* not only that he was to have a son, but that he was to be a fountainhead of prophets. So he now begins to plead at once for the sinful people to whom Lut was sent as a warner.

75. For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate, and given to look to Allah.(1572)

1572 Like al Mustafa, Abraham had three qualities in a pre-eminent degree, which are here mentioned: (1) he was long-suffering with other people's faults; (2) his sympathies and compassion were very wide; and (3) for every difficulty or trouble he turned to Allah and sought Him in prayer.

76. O Abraham! Seek not this. The decree of thy Lord hath gone forth: for them there cometh a penalty that cannot be turned back!(1573)

1573 This is a sort of prophetic apostrophe. 'All your care and sympathy are useless, O Abraham! All your warning, O Lut, will be unheeded! Alas! they are so deep in sin that nothing will reclaim them!' This is illustrated in verse 79 below. And now we proceed to Lut and how he was dealt with by the wicked.

77. When Our messengers came to Lut, he was grieved on their account and felt himself powerless (to protect) them. He said: "This is a distressful day."(1574)

1574 The story of Lot, as referred to in 7:80-84, laid emphasis on the rejection of Lot 's mission by men who practised unnatural abominations. See n. 1049 to 7:80. Here the emphasis is laid on Allah's dealings with men-in mercy for true spiritual service and in righteous wrath and punishment for those who defy the laws of nature established by Him; also, on men's dealings with each other and the contrast between the righteous and the wicked who respect no laws human or divine,

78. And his people came rushing towards him, and they had been long in the habit of practising abominations. He said: "O my people! Here are my daughters: they are purer for you (if ye marry)!(1575) Now fear Allah, and cover me not with shame about my guests! Is there not among you a single right-minded man?"

1575 The Biblical narrative suggests that the daughters were married and their husbands were close by (Gen. 19:14) and that these same daughters afterwards committed incest with their father and had children by him (Gen. 19:31). The Holy Qur'an nowhere suggests such abominations. Some Commentators suggest that "my daughters" in the mouth of a venerable man like Lut, the father of his people, may mean any young girls of those Towns. "My son" *(waladi)* is still a common mode of address in Arabic-speaking countries when an elderly man addresses a young man.

79. They said: "Well dost thou know we have no need of thy daughters: indeed thou knowest quite well what we want!"

80. He said: "Would that I had power to suppress you or that I could betake myself to some powerful support."(1576)

1576 Lut seemed helpless in the situation in which he found himself-alone against a rabble of people inflamed with evil passions. He wished he had had the strength to suppress them himself or had had some powerful support to lean on! But the powerful support was there, though he had not realised it till then. It was the support of Allah. His guests were not ordinary men, but Angels who had come to test the people before they inflicted the punishment. They now declared themselves, and gave him directions to get away before the morning, when the punishment would descend on the doomed Cities of the Plain.

81. (The Messengers) said: "O Lut! We are Messengers from thy Lord! By no means shall they reach thee! now travel with thy family while yet a part of the night remains, and let not any of you look back: but thy wife(1577) (will remain behind): To her will happen what happens to the people. Morning is their time appointed: Is not the morning nigh?"

1577 Even in Lot 's household was one who detracted from the harmony of the family. She was disobedient to her husband, and he was here obeying Allah's Command. She looked back and shared the fate of the wicked inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain: see also 66:10. The Biblical narrative suggests that she was turned in to a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26).

82. When Our Decree issued, We turned (the cities) upside down, and rained down on them brimstones(1578) hard as baked clay,(1579) spread, layer on layer,-

1578 *Cf.* 7:84 and n. 1052, and 51:33-34.

1579 *Sijjil,* a Persian word Arabicised, from *Sang-o-gil,* or *Sang-i-gil,* stone and clay, or hard as baked clay, according to the Qamus. Sodom and Gomorrah were in a tract of hard, caky, sulphurous soil, to which this description well applies. *Cf.* 51:33, where the words are "stones of clay" *(hijarah min tin)* in connection with the same incident. On the other hand, in 105:4, the word *Sijjil* is used for pellets of hard-baked clay in connection with Abraha and the Companions of the Elephant.

83. Marked as from thy Lord:(1580) Nor are they(1581) ever far from those who do wrong!

1580 If we take the words literally, they would mean that the showers of brimstones were marked with the destiny of the wicked as decreed by Allah. But would it not be better to take them figuratively, to mean that the shower of brimstones was especially appointed in Allah's Decree or Plan to mark the punishment for the crimes of Sodom and Gomorrah ?

1581 *They:* Arabic, *h iya:* some Commentators take the pronoun to refer to the wicked cities so destroyed: the meaning then would be: those wicked cities were not so different from other cities that do wrong, for they would all suffer similar punishment! Perhaps it would be better to refer "they" to the stones of punishment by a metonymy for "punishment": 'punishment would not be far from any people that did wrong.'

84. To the Madyan People(1582) (We sent) Shu´aib, one of their own brethren: he said: "O my people! worship Allah. Ye have no other god but Him. And give not short measure or weight: I see you in prosperity,(1583) but I fear for you the penalty of a day that will compass (you) all round.

1582 *Cf.* 7:85-93. The location of Madyan is explained in n. 1053 to 7:85 and the chronological place of Shu'ayb in n. 1064 to 7:93. The point of the reference here is different from that in S. 7. Here the emphasis is on Allah's dealings with men and men's crooked and obstinate ways: there the emphasis was rather on their treatment of their Prophet, thus throwing light on some of the sins of the Makkans in later times.

1583 The Midianites were a commercial people, and their besetting sin was commercial selfishness and fraudulent dealings in weights and measures. Their Prophet tells them that that is the surest way to cut short their "prosperity", both in the material and the spiritual sense. When the Day of Judgement comes, it will search out their dealings through and through: "it will compass them all round," and they will not be able to escape them, however much they may conceal their frauds in this world.

85. "And O my people! give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due:(1584) commit not evil in the land with intent to do mischief.

1584 Both Plato and Aristotle define justice as the virtue which gives everyone his due. From this point of view Justice becomes the master virtue, and includes most other virtues. It was the lack of this that ruined the Midianites. Their selfishness was "intent on mischief," *i.e.,* spoiling other people's business by not giving them their just dues.

86. "That which is left you by Allah is best for you,(1585) if ye (but) believed! but I am not set over you to keep watch!"

1585 Allah's Law does not require that a man should deprive himself of the things that are necessary for his own well-being and development. If he follows Allah's Law, what is left him after he renders to others their just dues will be not only enough, but will be the best possible provision for his own physical and spiritual growth. Even the kindness and consideration which Allah's Law inculcates are in the best interests of the man's own soul. But of course the kindness and consideration must be spontaneous. It must flow from the man's own will, and cannot be forced on him by the Teachers who come from Allah to show him the way.

87. They said: "O Shu´aib! Does thy (religion of) prayer command thee that we leave off the worship which our fathers practised, or that we leave off doing what we like with our property?(1586) truly, thou art the one that forbeareth with faults and is right-minded!"(1587)

1586 It is the say of selfish and material minded people (1) to scoff at spiritual things like prayer and worship and (2) to hug their own property rights as if there were not other rights even greater than those of property!

1587 They grow sarcastic against Shu'ayb. In effect they say: "You are a fine man! You teach us that we must be kind and forbearing with other people's faults, and now get at what you call our sins! You think you are the only right-minded man!"

88. He said: "O my people! see ye whether I have a Clear (Sign) from my Lord, and He hath given me sustenance (pure and) good(1588) as from Himself? I wish not, in opposition to you, to do that which I forbid you to do. I only desire (your) betterment to the best of my power; and my success (in my task) can only come from Allah. In Him I trust, and unto Him I look.

1588 Shu'ayb's answer is gentle and persuasive. First, he would ask them not to fly into a passion but satisfy themselves that he had a mission from Allah, and was working in the discharge of his mission: he was not merely finding fault with them. Secondly, though he was a poor man, he asked them to note that he was happy and comfortable: Allah had given him good sustenance t material and spiritual, as from Himself, though he did not resort to the sort of tricks which they considered necessary for their prosperity. Thirdly, if he forbade them anything he wished to apply the same standards to himself. Fourthly, all the advice which he is giving them is for their own good, which he desires to advance to the utmost of his powers. Fifthly, he is humble for himself; he would not set himself up to be their teacher or guide, or expect to be obeyed; the success of any of his efforts on their behalf must come from Allah's grace; will they not therefore turn to Allah, so mat Allah's grace can heal them?

89. "And O my people! let not my dissent (from you)(1589) cause you to sin, lest ye suffer a fate similar to that of the people of Noah or of Hud or of Salih, nor are the people of Lut far off from you!(1590)

1589 Finally, Shu'ayb appeals to them as man to man. "Because I differ from you, do not think I do not love you or feel for you. Let it not drive you into obstinacy and sin. I see things that you do not. My vision takes in the fate of previous generations who sinned, and perished on account of their sins. Turn therefore to Allah in repentance."

1590 The generation of Lut was not far off from the generation of Shu'ayb chronologically, if Shu'ayb was only in the fourth generation from Abraham (see n. 1064 to 7:93). Nor was its habitat geographically far from that of Shu'ayb, as the Midianites wandered about from the Sinai Peninsula to the Jordan valley (seen. 1053 to 7:85).

90. "But ask forgiveness of your Lord, and turn unto Him (in repentance): For my Lord is indeed full of mercy and loving-kindness."

91. They said: "O Shu´aib! much of what thou sayest we do not understand!(1591) In fact among us we see that thou hast no strength! Were it not for thy family, we should certainly have stoned thee! for thou hast among us no great position!"(1592)

1591 Spiritual things are easy to understand if we bring the right mind in them. But those who are contemptuous of them deliberately shut their eyes to Allah's Signs, and then pretend in their superior arrogance that they are 'quite beyond them'!

1592 What they do understand is brute strength. They practically say: "Don't you see that we have all the power and influence, and you, Shu'ayb, are only a poor Teacher? We could stone you or imprison you or do what we like with you! Thank us for our kindness that we spare you-for the sake of your family. It is more than you yourself deserve!"

92. He said: "O my people! is then my family of more consideration with you than Allah. For ye cast Him away behind your backs (with contempt). But verily my Lord encompasseth on all sides all that ye do!(1593)

1593 *Cf.* 8:47 .

93. "And O my people! Do whatever ye can: I will do (my part):(1594) Soon will ye know who it is on whom descends the penalty of ignominy; and who is a liar! and watch ye! for I too am watching with you!"(1595)

1594 *Cf.* 6:135 and n. 957, and 11:121.

1595 If the wicked will continue to blaspheme and mock, what can the godly say but this?-"Watch and wait! Allah's Plan works without fail! I have faith, and I too will watch with you for its fulfilment" *Cf.* 10:102, and n. 1484.

94. When Our decree issued, We saved Shu´aib and those who believed with him, by (special) mercy from Ourselves:(1596) But the (mighty) blast did seize the wrong- doers, and they lay prostrate in their homes by the morning,-

1596 *Cf.* 11:66 and 11:58 . n. 1554.

95. As if they had never dwelt and flourished there!(1597) Ah! Behold! How the Madyan were removed (from sight) as were removed the Thamud!

1597 *Cf.* 11:67-68. The blast was probably the tremendous noise which accompanies volcanic eruptions.

96. And we sent Moses,(1598) with Our Clear (Signs) and an authority manifest,

1598 The story of Moses and Pharaoh is referred to in many places in the Qur'an, each in connection with some special point to be illustrated. Here the point is that Allah's dealings with man are in all things and at all times just. But man falls under false leadership by deliberate choice and perishes along with his false leaders accordingly. In exercise of the intelligence and choice given him, man should be particularly careful to understand his own responsibilities and to profit from Allah's Signs, so as to attain to Allah's Mercy and blessings.

97. Unto Pharaoh and his chiefs: but they followed the Command(1599) of Pharaoh and the command of Pharaoh was no right (guide).

1599 Pharaoh is the type of the arrogant, selfish, and false leader, who poses as a power in rivalry with that of Allah. Such an attitude seems to attract unregenerate humanity, which falls a willing victim, in spite of the teaching and warning given by the Prophets of Allah and the many moral and spiritual forces that beckon man towards Allah's Grace.

98. He will go before his people on the Day of Judgment, and lead them into the Fire (as cattle are led to water):(1600) But woeful indeed will be the place to which they are led!

1600 *Awrada* = to lead, as cattle, down to their watering place. The metaphor is apt. The true herdsman is trusted by his normal flock, and he leads them in the heat of the day down to pleasant and cool watering places in order that they may slake their thirst and be happy. The false leader does the opposite: he takes them down to the fire of eternal misery! And yet men sin against their own intelligence, and follow the false leader like cattle without intelligence!

99. And they are followed by a curse in this (life) and on the Day of Judgment: and woeful is the gift which shall be given (unto them)!

100. These are some of the stories of communities which We relate unto thee: of them some are standing,(1601) and some have been mown down (by the sickle of time).(1602)

1601 *Some are standing,* like corn, which is ready to be reaped. Among the communities which remained was, and is, Egypt , although the Pharaoh and his wicked people have been swept away. The simile of standing corn also suggests that at no time can any town or community expect permanency, except in the Law of the Lord.

1602 Nations grow and ripen and are mown down. If they disobeyed Allah, their end is evil; if they were true and godly, their harvest was good.

101. It was not We that wronged them: They wronged their own souls: the deities, other than Allah, whom they invoked, profited them no whit when there issued the decree of thy Lord:(1603) Nor did they add aught (to their lot) but perdition!

1603 All false and fleeting shadows must vanish before the reality and permanence of the decree of Allah. If we worshipped the false, we earned nothing but perdition.

102. Such is the chastisement of thy Lord when He chastises communities in the midst of their wrong: grievous, indeed, and severe is His chastisement.

103. In that is a Sign for those who fear the penalty of the Hereafter: that is a Day for which mankind will be gathered together: that will be a Day of Testimony.(1604)

1604 *Yawm mashhud:* To suggest the comprehensive meaning of the Arabic I have translated, "a Day of Testimony". I proceed to explain the various shades of meaning implied: (1) a Day to which all testimony points from every quarter; (2) a Day when testimony will be given before Allah's Judgement Seat, by all who are relevant witnesses, *e.g.,* the Prophets that preached, the men or women we benefited or injured, the angels who recorded our thoughts and deeds, or our thoughts and deeds personified; (3) a Day which will be witnessed, *i.e.,* seen by all, no matter how or where they died.

104. Nor shall We delay it but for a term appointed.

105. The day it arrives, no soul shall speak(1605) except by His leave: of those (gathered) some will be wretched and some will be blessed.(1606)

1605 *Speak: i.e.,* either in self-defence or in accusation of others or to intercede for others, or to enter into conversation or ask questions, one with another. It will be a solemn Day, before the Great Judge of all, to whom everything will be known and whose authority will be unquestioned. There will be no room for quibbling or equivocation or subterfuge of any kind, nor can anyone lay the blame on another or take the responsibility of another. Personal responsibility will be enforced strictly.

1606 *Shaqi* (wretched) and *Sa'id* (blessed) have become almost technical theological terms. They are explained in the four following verses.

106. Those who are wretched shall be in the Fire: There will be for them therein (nothing but) the heaving of sighs and sobs:(1607)

1607 The first word, *Zafir,* translated "sighs", is applied to one part in the process of the braying of an ass, when he emits a deep breath *(Cf.* 25:12). The second, *Shahiq,* translated "sobs", is the other process in the braying of an ass, when he draws in a long breath. This suggestion of an animal proverbial for his folly implies that the wicked, in spite of their arrogance and insolence in this world below, will at last realise that they have been fools after all, throwing away their own chances whenever they got diem. In 67:7 the word *Shahiq* is applied to the tremendous roaring intake or devouring of Hell-fire.

107. They will dwell therein(1608) for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as thy Lord willeth: for thy Lord is the (sure) accomplisher of what He planneth.

1608 *Khalidin:* This is the word which is usually translated "dwell forever" or "dwell for aye". Here it is definitely connected with two conditions, *viz:* (1) as long as the heavens and the earth endure, and (2) except as Allah wills. Some Muslim theologians deduce from this the conclusion that the penalties referred to are not eternal, because the heavens and the earth as we see them are not eternal, and the punishments for the deeds of a life that will end should not be such as will never end. The majority of Muslim theologians reject this view. They hold that the heavens and the earth here referred to are not those we see now, but others that will be eternal. They agree that Allah's Will is unlimited in scope and power, but that it has willed that the rewards and punishments of the Day of Judgement will be eternal. This is not the place to enter into this tremendous controversy.

108. And those who are blessed shall be in the Garden: They will dwell therein(1609) for all the time that the

heavens and the earth endure, except as thy Lord willeth: a gift without break.(1610)

1609 Exactly the same arguments apply as in the last note.

1610 The felicity will be uninterrupted, unlike any joy or happiness which we can imagine in this life and which is subject to chances and changes, as our daily experience shows.

109. Be not then in doubt as to what these men worship. They worship nothing(1611) but what their fathers worshipped before (them): but verily We shall pay them back (in full) their portion(1612) without (the least) abatement.

1611 Their worship is not based on any spiritual attitude of mind. They merely follow the ways of their fathers.

1612 Allah will take fully into account all their motives in such mummery as they call worship, and they will have their full spiritual consequences in the future.

110. We certainly gave the Book to Moses, but differences arose therein: had it not been that a word had gone forth before from thy Lord, the matter would have been decided(1613) between them, but they are in suspicious doubt concerning it.(1614)

1613 *Cf.* 10:19 . Previous revelations are not to be denied or dishonoured because those who nominally go by them have corrupted and deprived them of spiritual value by their vain controversies and disputes. It was possible to settle such disputes under the flag, as it were, of the old Revelations, but Allah's Plan was to revive and rejuvenate His Message through Islam, amongst a newer and younger people, unhampered by the burden of age-old prejudices.

1614 *Cf.* 11:62. There is always in human affairs the conflict between the old and the new-the worn out system of our ancestors, and the fresh living spring of Allah's inspiration fitting in with new times and new surroundings. The advocates of the former look upon this latter not only with intellectual doubt but with moral suspicion, as did the People of the Book upon Islam, with its fresh outlook and vigorous realistic way of looking at things.

111. And, of a surety, to all will your Lord pay back (in full the recompense) of their deeds: for He knoweth well all that they do.(1615)

1615 *Cf.* 11:109 above, with which the argument is now connected by recalling the characteristic word ("pay back") and leading to the exhortation (in the verses following) to stand firm in the right path freshly revealed.

112. Therefore stand firm (in the straight Path) as thou art commanded,- thou and those who with thee turn (unto Allah.; and transgress not (from the Path): for He seeth well all that ye do.

113. And incline not to those who do wrong, or the Fire will seize you; and ye have no protectors other than Allah, nor shall ye be helped.

114. And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day(1616) and at the approaches of the night:(1617) For those things, that are good remove those that are evil:(1618) Be that the word of remembrance to those who remember (their Lord):

1616 *The two ends of the day:* Morning and afternoon. **The** morning prayer is the *Fajr,* after the light is up but before sunrise: we thus get up early and begin the day with the remembrance of Allah and of our duty to Him. The early afternoon prayer, *Zuhr,* is immediately after noon : we are in the midst of our daily life, and again we remember Allah. (R).

1617 *Approaches of the night: Zulafun,* plural of *Zulfatun,* an approach, something near at hand. As Arabic has, like Greek, a dual number distinct from the plural, and the plural number is used here, and not the dual, it is reasonable to argue that at least three "approaches of the night" are meant. The late afternoon prayer, *'Asr,* can be one of these three, and the evening prayer, *Maghrib, just* after sunset, can be the second. The early night prayer,' *Isha'* at supper time when the glow of sunset is disappearing, would be the third of the "approaches of the night", when we commit ourselves to Allah before sleep. These are the five canonical prayers of Islam, *(Cf.* n. 3521).

1618 *Those things that are good:* in this context the words refer primarily to prayers and sacred thoughts, but they include all good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. It is by them that we keep away everything that is evil, whether referring to the past, the present, or the future.

115. And be steadfast in patience; for verily Allah will not suffer the reward of the righteous to perish.

116. Why were there not, among the generations before you, persons possessed of balanced(1619) good sense, prohibiting (men) from mischief in the earth - except a few among them whom We saved (from harm)?(1620) But the wrong-doers pursued the enjoyment of the good things of life which were given them, and persisted in sin.

1619 *Baqiyah:* some virtue or faculty that stands assault and is lasting; balanced good sense that stands firm to virtue and is not dazzled by the lusts and pleasures of this world, and is not deterred by fear from boldly condemning wrong if it was fashionable or customary. It is leaders possessed of such character that can save a nation from disaster or perdition. The scarcity of such leaders-and the rejection of the few who stood out-brought ruin among the nations whose example has already been set out to us as a warning. In 11:86 the word has a more literal meaning.

1620 The exceptional men of firm virtue would have been destroyed by the wicked to whom they were an offence, had they not been saved by the Grace and Mercy of Allah. Or perhaps, but for such grace, they might themselves have succumbed to the evil around them, or been overwhelmed in the general calamity.

117. Nor would thy Lord be the One to destroy communities for a single wrongdoing,(1621) if its members were likely to mend.

1621 There are different shades of interpretation for this verse. I follow Baydawi in construing *zulmin* here as "a single wrong". He thinks that the wrong referred to is *shirk,* or polytheism; Allah will not destroy for mere wrong belief if the conduct is right. I am inclined to interpret it in more general terms. Allah is Long-Suffering and Oft-Forgiving: He is too Merciful to destroy for a single wrong, if there is any hope of reclaiming the wrongdoers to repentance and amendment or right life. An alternative interpretation is: "to destroy communities unjustly.". . .

118. If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind(1622) one people: but they will not cease to dispute.

1622 *Cf.* 10:19 . All mankind night have been one. But in Allah's Plan man was to have a certain measure of free will, and this made differences inevitable. This would not have mattered if all had honestly sought Allah. But selfishness and moral wrong came in, and people's disputations became mixed up with hatred, jealousy, and sin, except in the case of those who accepted Allah's grace, which saved them. The object of their creation was to raise them up spiritually by Allah's grace. But if they will choose the path of evil and fall into sin, Allah's decree must be fulfilled, and His justice will take its course. In the course of that justice Hell will be filled with men and spirits, such is the number of those who go astray.

119. Except those on whom thy Lord hath bestowed His Mercy: and for this did He create them: and the Word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled: "I will fill Hell with jinns and men all together."(1623)

1623 *Cf.* 7:18 and 7:179. If Satan and his evil spirits tempt men from the path of rectitude, the responsibility of the tempted, who choose the path of evil, is no less than that of the tempters, and they will both be involved in punishment together (see also 32:13).

120. All that we relate to thee of the stories of the messengers,- with it We make firm thy heart: in them there cometh to thee the Truth, as well as an exhortation and a message of remembrance to those who believe.(1624)

1624 The stories of the Prophets in the Qur'an are not mere narratives or histories: they involve three things: (1) they teach the highest spiritual Truth; (2) they give advice, direction, and warning, as to how we should govern our lives, and (3) they awaken our conscience and recall to us the working of Allah's Law in human affairs. The story of Joseph in the next Surah is an illustration in point.

121. Say to those who do not believe: "Do what ever ye can: We shall do our part;(1624-A)

1624-A *Cf.* 11:93 and 6:135, n. 957. The worst that you can do will not defeat Allah's plan; and as for us who believe, our obvious duty is to do our part as taught to us by Allah's revelation (see also 39:39).

122. "And wait ye! We too shall wait."(1625)

1625 *Cf.* 11:93, n. 1595, and 10:102, n. 1484. If the wicked only wait, they will see how Allah's Plan unfolds itself. As for those who believe, they are glad to wait in perfect confidence, because they know that Allah is good and merciful, as well as just and true.

123. To Allah do belong the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth, and to Him goeth back every affair (for decision): (1626)then worship Him, and put thy trust in Him: and thy Lord is not unmindful of aught that ye do.

1626 *Cf.* 2:210. There is nothing, secret or open, in our world or in Creation, which does not depend ultimately on Allah's Will and Plan. Every affair goes back to Him for decision. Therefore we must worship Him and trust Him. Worship implies many things: e.g., (1) trying to understand His nature and His Will; (2) realising His goodness and glory, and His working in us; as a means to this end, (3) keeping Him in constant remembrance and celebrating His praise, to whom all praise is due; and (4) completely identifying our will with His, which means obedience to His Law, and service to Him and His creatures in all sincerity (see also n. 172).



12. Yusuf (Joseph)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A.L.R.(1627) These are the Symbols(1628) (or Verses) of the perspicuous Book.(1629)

1627 For the meaning of these mystic letters, see Introduction to S. 10.

1628 *Ayat* Signs, Symbols, verses of the Qur'an. The Symbolic meaning is particularly appropriate here, as the whole of Joseph's story is a Sign or a Miracle—a working exposition of the Plan and Purpose of Allah.

1629 *Cf.* 5:15 , n. 716. The predominant meaning *of Mubin* here is: one that explains or makes things clear.

2. We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur´an,(1630) in order that ye may learn wisdom.

1630 *Qur'an* means: something (1) to be read, or (2) recited, or (3) proclaimed. It may apply to averse, or a Surah, or to the whole Book of Revelation *(Cf.* 16:103 and 41:44).

3. We do relate unto thee the most beautiful of stories,(1631) in that We reveal to thee this (portion of the) Qur´an: before this, thou too was among those who knew it not.

1631 *Most beautiful of stories:* see Introduction to this Surah. Eloquence consists in conveying by a word or hint many meanings for those who can understand and wish to learn wisdom. Not only is Joseph's story "beautiful" in that sense; Joseph himself was renowned for manly beauty: the women of Egypt , called him a noble angel (12:31), and the beauty of his exterior form was a symbol of the beauty of his soul.

4. Behold! Joseph said to his father: "O my father!(1632) I did see eleven stars and the sun and the moon: I saw them prostrate themselves to me!"(1633)

1632 For the Parable all that is necessary to know about Joseph is that he was one of the Chosen Ones of Allah. For the story it is necessary to set down a few more details. His father was Jacob, also called Israel the son of Isaac, the younger son of Abraham, (the elder son having been Isma'i1, whose story is told in 2:124-129). Abraham may be called the Father of the line of Semitic prophecy. Jacob had four wives. From three of them he had ten sons. In his old age he had from Rachel (Arabic *Rahil),* a very beautiful woman, two sons Joseph and Benjamin (the youngest). At the time this story begins we may suppose that Joseph was about seventeen years of age. The place where Jacob and his family and his flocks were located was in Canaan, and is shown by tradition near modern Nablus (ancient Shechem), some thirty miles north of Jerusalem . The traditional site of the well into which Joseph was thrown by his brothers is still shown in the neighbourhood.

1633 Joseph was a mere lad of seventeen. But he was true and frank and righteous; he was a type of manly beauty and rectitude. His father loved him dearly. His half-brothers were jealous of him and hated him. His destiny was prefigured in the vision. He was to be exalted in rank above his eleven brothers (stars) and his father and mother (sun and moon), but as the subsequent story shows, he never lost his head, but always honoured his parents and repaid his brothers' craft and hatred with forgiveness and kindness.

5. Said (the father): "My (dear) little son! relate not thy vision to thy brothers, lest they concoct a plot against thee:(1634) for Satan is to man an avowed enemy!(1635)

1634 The young lad Yusuf was innocent and did not even know of his brothers' guile and hatred, but the father knew and warned him.

1635 The story is brought up at once to its spiritual bearing. These brothers were puppets in the hands of Evil. They allowed their manhood to be subjugated by Evil, not remembering that Evil was the declared opposite or enemy of the true nature and instincts of manhood.

6. "Thus will thy Lord choose thee and teach thee the interpretation of stories(1636) (and events) and perfect His favour to thee and to the posterity of Jacob - even as He perfected it to thy fathers Abraham and Isaac aforetime! for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom."(1637)

1636 If Joseph was to be of the elect, he must understand and interpret Signs and events aright. The imagination of the pure sees truths, which those not so endowed cannot understand. The dreams of the righteous prefigure great events, while the dreams of the futile are mere idle futilities. Even things that happen to us are often like dreams. The righteous man receives disasters and reverses, not with blasphemies against Allah, but with humble devotion, seeking to ascertain His Will. Nor does he receive good fortune with arrogance, but as an opportunity for doing good, to friends and foes alike. His attitude to histories and stories is the same: he seeks the edifying material which leads to Allah.

1637 Whatever happens is the result of Allah's Will and Plan. And He is good and wise, and He knows all things. Therefore we must trust Him. In Joseph's case he could look back to his fathers, and to Abraham, the True, the Righteous, who through all adversities kept his Faith pure and undefiled, and won through.

7. Verily in Joseph and his brethren are signs (or symbols) for seekers (after Truth).(1638)

1638 In Joseph's story we have good and evil contrasted in so many different ways. Those in search of true spiritual knowledge can see it embodied in concrete events in this story of many facets, matching the colours of Joseph's many-coloured coat.

8. They said: "Truly Joseph and his brother are loved more by our father than we: But we are a goodly body!(1639) really our father is obviously wandering (in his mind)!

1639 The ten brothers envied and hated their innocent younger brothers, Joseph and Benjamin. Jacob had the wisdom to see that his young and innocent sons wanted protection and to perceive Joseph's spiritual greatness. But his wisdom, to them, was folly or madness or imbecility, because it touched their self-love, as truth often does. And they relied on the brute strength of numbers—the ten hefty brethren against old Jacob, the lad Joseph, and the boy Benjamin!

9. "Slay ye Joseph or cast him out to some (unknown) land, that so the favour of your father may be given to you alone: (there will be time enough) for you to be righteous after that!"(1640)

1640 There seems to be some irony here, consistent with the cynical nature of these callous, worldly-wise brethren. The goodness of Joseph was a reproach to their own wickedness. Perhaps the grieved father contrasted Joseph against them, and sometimes spoke of it: "Why don'tyou be good like Joseph?" This was gall and wormwood to them. Real goodness was to them nothing but a name. Perhaps it only suggested hypocrisy to them. So they plotted to get rid of Joseph. In their mean hearts they thought that would bring back their father's love whole to them. But they valued that love only for what material good they could get out of it. On the other hand their father was neither foolish nor unjustly partial. He only knew the difference between gold and dross. They say in irony, "Let us first get rid of Joseph. It will be time enough then to pretend to be 'good' like him, or to repent of our crime after we have had all its benefits in material things!"

10. Said one of them: "Slay not Joseph, but if ye must do something, throw him down to the bottom of the well: he will be picked up by some caravan of travellers."(1641)

1641 One of the brethren, perhaps less cruel by nature, or perhaps more worldly-wise, said: "Why undertake the risk of blood-guiltiness? Throw him into the well you see there! Some travellers passing by will pick him up and remove him to a far country. If not, at least *we* shall not have killed him:" This was false casuistry, but such casuistry appeals to sinners of a certain kind of temperament. The well was apparently a dry well, deep enough to prevent his coming out, but with no water in which he could be drowned. It was Allah's Plan to save him alive, but not to make Joseph indebted to any of his brethren for his life!

11. They said: "O our father! why dost thou not trust us with Joseph,- seeing we are indeed his sincere well-wishers?(1642)

1642 The plot having been formed, the brethren proceed to put it into execution. Jacob, knowing the situation, did not ordinarily trust his beloved Joseph with the brethren. The latter therefore remonstrate and feign brotherly affection.

12. "Send him with us tomorrow to enjoy himself and play, and we shall take every care of him."(1643)

1643 They did not expect their protestations to be believed. But they added an argument that might appeal both to Jacob and Joseph. 'They were going to give their young brother a good time. Why not let him come out with them and play and enjoy himself to his heart's content?'

13. (Jacob) said: "Really it saddens me that ye should take him away: I fear lest the wolf should devour him while ye attend not(1644) to him."

1644 Jacob did not know the precise plot, but he had strong misgivings. But how could he put off'these brethren? If they were driven to open hostility, they would be certain to cause him harm. He must deal with the brethren wisely and cautiously. He pleaded that he was an old man, and would miss Joseph and be sad without him. And after all, Joseph was not of an age to play with them. They would be attending to their own affairs, and a wolf might come and attack and kill Joseph. In saying this he was really unwittingly giving a cue to the wicked ones, for they use that very excuse in verse 17 below. Thus the wicked plot thickens, but there is a counter-plan also, which is drawing a noose of lies round the wicked ones, so that they are eventually driven into a corner, and have to confess their own guilt in verse 91 below, and through repentance obtain forgiveness.

14. They said: "If the wolf were to devour him while we are (so large) a party, then should we indeed (first) have perished ourselves!"(1645)

1645 Jacob's objections as stated could be easily rebutted, and the brethren did so. They would be eleven in the party, and the ten strong and grown-up men would have to perish before the wolf could touch the young lad Joseph! So they prevailed, as verbal arguments are apt to prevail, when events are weaving their web on quite another Plan, which has nothing to do with verbal arguments. Presumably Benjamin was too young to go with them.

15. So they did take him away, and they all agreed to throw him down to the bottom of the well: and We put into his heart(1646) (this Message): ´Of a surety thou shalt (one day) tell them the truth of this their affair while they know (thee) not.´(1647)

1646 Allah was with Joseph in all his difficulties, sorrows, and sufferings, as He is with all His servants who put their trust in Him. The poor lad was betrayed by his brothers, and left, perhaps to die or to be sold into slavery. But his heart was undaunted. His courage never failed him. On the contrary he had an inkling, a presentiment, of things that were to be—that his own rectitude and beauty of soul would land him on his feet, and perhaps some day, his brothers would stand in need of him, and he would be in a position to fulfil that need, and would do it gladly, putting them to shame for their present plotting and betrayal of him.

1647 This situation occurred when Joseph later on became the governor of Egypt and his brothers stood before him suing for his assistance although they did not know that he was their betrayed brother; see 12:89 below; also 12:58.

16. Then they came to their father in the early part of the night, weeping.(1648)

1648 The plotters were ready with their false tale for their father, but in order to make it appear plausible, they came sometime after sundown, to show that they had made an effort to search for their brother and save him.

17. They said: "O our father! We went racing with one another,(1649) and left Joseph with our things; and the wolf devoured him.... But thou wilt never believe us even though we tell the truth."(1650)

1649 They wanted to make out that they were not negligent of Joseph. They were naturally having games and exercise, while the boy was left with their belongings. It was the racing that prevented them from seeing the wolf. And Jacob's fears about the wolf (12:13 above) made them imagine that he would swallow the wolf story readily.

1650 They were surprised that Jacob received the story about the wolf with cold incredulity. So they grew petulant, put on an air of injured innocence, and brought out the blood-stained garment described in the next verse.

18. They stained his shirt(1651) with false blood. He said: "Nay, but your minds have made up a tale (that may pass) with you,(1652) (for me) patience is most fitting: Against that which ye assert, it is Allah (alone) Whose help can be sought"..

1651 Joseph wore a garment of many colours, which was a special garment peculiar to him. If the brethren could produce it blood-stained before their father, they thought he would be convinced that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. But the stain on the garment was a stain of "false blood" —not the blood of Joseph, but the blood of a goat which the brethren had killed expressly for this purpose. Their device, however, was not quite convincing because, as some Commentators have pointed out, the garment was intact which is inconceivable if a wolf had indeed devoured Joseph. (R).

1652 Jacob saw that there had been some foul play, and he did not hesitate to say so. In effect he said: "Ah me! the tale may tell may be good enough for you, who invented it! But what about me, your aged father? What is there left in life for me now, with my beloved son gone? And yet what can I do but hold my heart in patience and implore Allah's assistance? I have faith, and I know that all that He does is for the best!"

19. Then there came a caravan(1653) of travellers: they sent their water-carrier (for water), and he let down his bucket (into the well)...He said: "Ah there! Good news!(1654) Here is a (fine) young man!" So they concealed him(1655) as a treasure! But Allah knoweth well all that they do!(1656)

1653 Then comes the caravan of unknown travellers-Midianite or Arab merchants travelling to Egypt with merchandise, such as the balm of Gilead in Transjordania. In accordance with custom the caravan was preceded by advance parties to search out water and pitch a camp near. They naturally went to the well and let down their bucket.

1654 The water carrier is surprised and taken aback, when he finds a youth of comely appearance, innocent like an angel, with a face as bright as the sun! What is he to make of it? Anyhow, to see him is a delight! And he shouts it out as a piece of good news. Some Commentators think that *"Bushra",* the Arabic word for "Good news", is a proper noun, the name of the companion to whom he shouted.

1655 It was a caravan of merchants, and they think of everything in terms of the money to be made out of it! Here was an unknown, unclaimed youth, of surpassing beauty, with apparently a mind as refined as his external beauty. If he could be sold in the opulent slave markets of Memphis or whatever was the capital of the Hyksos Dynasty then ruling in Egypt (see Appendix IV following S. 7), What a price he would fetch! They had indeed lighted upon a treasure! And they wanted to conceal him lest he was another's slave and had run away from his master who might come and claim him! The circumstances were peculiar and the merchants were cautious. *Bida'ah* - stock in trade: capital; money; wealth; treasure *(Cf.* 12:62).

1656 To different minds the situation appeared different. Joseph must have felt keenly the edge of his brethren's treason. His father Jacob was lost in the sorrow of the loss of his best-beloved son. The brethren were exulting in their plan of getting rid of one whom they hated. The merchants were gloating over their gains. But the horizon of all was limited. Allah knew their deeds and their feelings and motives, and He was working out His own Plan. Neither the best of us nor the worst of us know whether our Destiny is leading us-how evil plots are defeated and goodness comes to its own in marvelous ways!

20. They sold him for a miserable price, for a few dirhams(1657) counted out: in such low estimation did they hold him!(1658)

1657 *Dirham;* from Greek, *drachma,* a small silver coin, which varied in weight and value at different times and in different States. (R).

1658 And so the most precious of human lives in the age was sold into slavery for a few silver pieces! (R). 1658-A. In popular tradition the wife of the Egyptian courtier is identified as Zulaykha. [Eds].

21. The man in Egypt(1659) who bought him, said to his wife: "Make his stay (among us) honourable:(1660) may be he will bring us much good, or we shall adopt him as a son." Thus did We establish Joseph in the land,(1661) that We might teach him the interpretation of stories(1662) (and events). And Allah hath full power and control over His affairs; but most among mankind know it not.(1663)

1659 Joseph is now clear of his jealous brethren in the land of Canaan . The merchants take him to Egypt . In the city of Memphis (or whatever was the Egyptian capital then) he was exposed for sale by the merchants. The merchants had not miscalculated. There was a ready market for him: his handsome presence, his winning ways, his purity and innocence, his intelligence and integrity, combined with his courtesy and noble manliness, attracted all eyes to him. There was the keenest competition to purchase him, and in the highest Court circles. Every competitor was outbid by a high court official, who is called in verse 30 below "the 'Aziz" (the Exalted in rank). (R).

1660 See last note. The 'Aziz's motive was perhaps worldly. Such a handsome, attractive, intelligent son would get him more honour, dignity, power and wealth. (R).

1661 How unerringly Allah's plan works! To teach Joseph wisdom and power, he had to be tested and proved in righteousness, and advanced in Egypt , and the way prepared for Israel and his posterity to proclaim Allah's truth to the world and to make possible the subsequent missions of Moses and al Mustafa (R).

1662 *Ahadith* might be stories, things imagined or related, things that happened, in life or in true dreams. To suppose that phenomenal events are the only reality is a mark of one-sided materialism. As Hamlet said to Horatio, "there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." External events have their own limited reality, but there are bigger realities behind them, and sometimes appear darkly in the visions of ordinary men, but more clearly in the visions of poets, seers, sages, and prophets. Joseph had to be trained in seeing the realities behind events and visions. He was hated by his brothers and sold by them into slavery: they were sending him into the land of Egypt , where he was to rule men. He loved his father dearly and was separated from him, and his mother had died early; but his affection was not blunted, but drawn to a keener edge when his benevolent work benefited millions in Egypt , and in the world. His own vision of star, sun, and moon prostrating themselves before him, was no idle dream of a selfish fool, but the prefigurernent of a power, which, used rightly, was to make his own honour an instrument of service to millions he had not seen, through men and women whose own power and dignity were sanctified through him. He was to understand the hidden meaning of what seemed futilities, blunderings, snares, evil plottings, love gone wrong, and power used tyrannically. He was to interpret truth to those who would never have reached it otherwise.

1663 *Cf.:* "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will." Only, in Shakespeare, (Hamlet, V. 2), we have a vague and distant ideal, an irresolute striving, an unsuccessful attempt at getting beyond "this too, too solid flesh"! In Joseph we have the Prophet of Allah, sure in faith, above all carnal motives, and advancing the destiny of mankind with a conscious purpose, as the scroll of knowledge, wisdom, and power, unfolds itself before him by the grace of Allah, All-Good and All-Powerful.

22. When Joseph attained(1664) His full manhood, We gave him power and knowledge: thus do We reward those who do right.(1665)

1664 When Joseph left Canaan , he was a young and immature lad of seventeen or eighteen, but his nature was innocent and good. Through the vicissitudes of his fortune in Egypt , he grew in knowledge, judgement, and power.

1665 *Muhsinin:* those who do right, those who do good. Both ideas are implied. In following the right conduct, you are necessarily doing good to yourself and to others.

23. But she in whose house he was, sought to seduce him(1666) from his (true) self: she fastened the doors, and said: "Now come, thou (dear one)!" He said: "(Allah) forbid! truly (thy husband) is my lord! he made my sojourn agreeable! truly to no good come those who do wrong!"(1667)

1666 The 'Aziz had treated Joseph with honour: he was more his guest and son than his slave. In trying to seduce Joseph in these circumstances, his wife was guilty of a crime against Joseph's own honour and dignity. And there was a third fault in her earthly love. True love blots Self out: it thinks more of the loved one than of the Self. The 'Aziz's wife was seeking the satisfaction of her own selfish passion, and was in treason against Joseph's pure soul and his high destiny. It was inevitable that Joseph should repel the advances made by the wife of the courtier. (R).

1667 Joseph's plea in rejecting her advances is threefold:' (1) I owe a duty, and so do you, to your husband, | the 'Aziz; (2) the kindness, courtesy, and honour, with which he has treated me entitled him to more than mere gratitude from me; (3) in any case, do you not see that you are harbouring a guilty passion, and that no good can come out of guilt? we must all obey laws, human and divine.' (R).

24. And (with passion) did she desire him, and he would have desired her, but that he saw the evidence(1668) of his Lord: thus (did We order) that We(1669) might turn away from him (all) evil and shameful deeds: for he was one of Our servants, sincere and purified.

1668 She was blinded with passion, and his plea had no effect on her. He was human after all, and her passionate love and her beauty placed a great temptation in his path. But he had a sure refuge-his faith in Allah. His spiritual eyes saw something that her eyes, blinded by passion, did not see. She thought no one saw when the doors were closed. He knew that Allah was there and everywhere. That made him strong, and proof against temptation.

1669 The credit of our being saved from sin is due, not to our weak earthly nature, but to Allah. We can only try like Joseph, to be true and sincere: Allah will purify us and save us from all that is wrong. Tempted but true, we rise above ourselves.

25. So they both raced each other to the door, and she tore his shirt from the back:(1670) they both found her lord near the door. She said: "What is the (fitting) punishment for one who formed an evil design against

thy wife, but prison or a grievous chastisement?"(1671)

1670 With his master's wife in her mad passion, the situation became intolerable, and Joseph made for the door. She ran after him to detain him. She tugged at his garment to detain him. As he was retreating, she could only catch hold of the back of his shirt, and in the struggle she tore it. He was determined to open the door and leave the place, as it was useless to argue with her in her mad passion. When the door was opened, it so happened that the 'Aziz was not far off. We need not assume that he was spying, or had any suspicions either of his wife or Joseph. In his narrow limited way he was a just man. We can imagine his wife's consternation. One guilt leads to another. She had to resort to a lie, not only to justify herself but also to have her revenge on the man who had scorned her love. Slighted love (of the physical kind) made her ferocious, and she lost all sense of right and wrong. (R).

1671 Her lie and her accusation were plausible. Joseph was found with his dress disarranged. She wanted the inference to be drawn that he had assaulted her and she had resisted. For one in his position it was a dreadful crime. Should he not be consigned to a dungeon or at least scourged? Perhaps she hoped that in either case he would be more pliable to her designs in the future.

26. He said: "It was she that sought to seduce me - (1672) from my (true) self." And one of her household saw (this) and bore witness, (thus):-(1673) "If it be that his shirt is rent from the front, then is her tale true, and he is a liar!

1672 Joseph bore himself with dignity. He was too great and noble to indulge in angry recrimination. But he had to tell the truth. And he did it with quiet simplicity, without argument or bitterness-and not caring whether he was believed or not. 'The love game was hers, not his, and it went too far in seeking to assault his person.'

1673 In the nature of things there was no eyewitness to what had happened between them. But as there was a scene and the whole household collected, wisdom came through one who was not immediately concerned. They say it was a child. If so, it illustrates the truth that the most obvious things are not noticed by people who are excited, but are plain to simple people who remain calm. Wisdom comes often through babes and sucklings.

27. "But if it be that his shirt is torn from the back, then is she the liar, and he is telling the truth!"(1674)

1674 If Joseph's shirt was torn at the back, he must obviously have been retreating, and the wife of the 'Aziz must have been tugging from behind. No one could doubt who was the guilty party. Everybody saw it, and the 'Aziz was convinced. (R).

28. So when he saw his shirt,- that it was torn at the back,- (her husband) said: "Behold! It is a snare of you women!(1675) truly, mighty is your snare!

1675 When the real fact became clear to everyone, the 'Aziz as head of the household had to decide what to do. His own position was difficult, and it was made ridiculous. He was a high officer of state, say Grand Chamberlain. His dignity and rank were advanced by the so-called marriage with a high-born Princess. Was he going to proclaim to the world that his wife was running after a slave? He was probably fond of her, and he saw the innocence, loyalty, and sterling merit of Joseph. He must treat the whole affair as a woman's prank-the madness of sex-love, and the tricks and snares connected with sex-love. He must take no further action but to rate his life and do justice. (R).

29. "O Joseph, pass this over! (O wife), ask forgiveness for thy sin, for truly thou hast been at fault!"(1676)

1676 As was only fair, he apologised to Joseph and begged him to give no further thought to the injury [hat had been done to him, first by the love-snare of his wife, secondly, by the utterly false charge made against him, and thirdly, by the scene, which must have been painful to a man of such spotless character as Joseph. That was not enough. He must ask his wife humbly to beg J oseph's pardon for the wrong that she had done him. And he must further ask her to consider her unbecoming conduct in itself, apart from any wrong done to Joseph. (R).

30. Ladies said in the City: "The wife of the (great) ´Aziz(1677) is seeking to seduce her slave from his (true) self: Truly hath he inspired her with violent love: we see she is evidently going astray."(1678)

1677 *'Aziz:* title of a nobleman or officer of Court, of high rank. Considering all the circumstances, the office of Grand Chamberlain or minister may be indicated. But "Aziz" I think is a title, not an office. I have not translated the tide but left it as it is. "Excellency or "Highness" would have specialised modem associations which I want to avoid.

1678 The Aziz's just, wise, and discreet conduct would have closed the particular episode of his wife's guilt)' conduct if only The women had left her alone and she had not foolishly thought of justifying her conduct to them. The 'Aziz had reproved her, and he had the right and authority so to do. He also probably understood her, Joseph by his behavior had upheld the highest standard both for himself and for her. (R).

31. When she heard of their malicious talk, she sent for them and prepared a banquet(1679) for them: she gave each of them a knife: and she said (to Joseph), "Come out before them." When they saw him, they did extol him, and (in their amazement) cut their hands: they said, "(Allah) preserve us! no mortal is this! this is none other than a noble angel!"

1679 When her reputation began to be pulled to pieces with sundry exaggerations and distortions and malicious innuendos, the wife of 'Aziz invited all the ladies in society to a grand banquet. We can imagine them reclining at ease after the manner of fashionable banquets. When dessert was reached and the talk flowed freely about the gossip and scandal which made their hostess interesting, they were just about to cut the fruit with their knives, when, behold! Joseph was brought into their midst. Imagine the consternation which his beauty caused, and the havoc it played with their hearts! "Ah!", thought the wife of 'Aziz "now is your hypocrisy self-exposed! What about your reproaches to me? You have yourselves so lost your self-control that you have cut your ringers!" (R).

32. She said: "There before you is the man about whom ye did blame me! I did seek to seduce him from his (true) self but he did firmly save himself guiltless!(1680)....and now, if he doth not my bidding, he shall certainly be cast into prison, and (what is more) be of the company of the vilest!"

1680 Her speech is subtle, and shows that any repentance or compunction she may have felt is blotted out by the collective crowd mentality into which she has deliberately invited herself to fall. Her speech falls into two parts, with a hiatus between, which I have marked by the punctuation mark (. . .) In the first part there is a note of triumph, as much as to say, "Now you see! Mine was no vulgar passion! You are just as susceptible! You would have done the same thing!" Finding encouragement from their passion and their fellow-feelings, she openly avows as a woman amongst women (by a sort of freemasonry) what she would have been ashamed to acknowledge to others before. She falls a step lower and boasts of it. A step lower still, and she sneers at Joseph's innocence, his firmness in saving himself guiltless! There is a pause. The tide of passion rises still higher, and the dreadful second part of her speech begins. It is a sort of joint consultation, though she speaks in monologue. The women all agree that no man has a right to resist their solicitations. Beauty spurned is the highest crime. And so now she rises to the height of tragic guilt and threatens Joseph. She forgets all her finer feelings, and is overpowered by brute passion. After all, he is a slave and must obey his mistress! Or, there is prison, and the company of the vilest, instead of the caresses of beauty and fashion in high places!" Poor, deluded, fallen creature! She sank lower than herself, in seeking the support of the crowd around her! What pain and suffering and sorrow can expiate the depth of this crime? (R).

33. He said: "O my Lord! the prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me:(1681) Unless Thou turn away their snare from me, I should (in my youthful folly) feel inclined towards them and join the ranks of the ignorant."(1682)

1681 *"To which they invite me.* "Notice it is now "they" not "she". Where there was the snare of one woman before, it is now the collective snare of many women—of womankind!

1682 Joseph's speech is characteristic. Like a true Prophet of Allah, he takes refuge in Allah. He knows the weakness of human nature. He would not pit his own strength against the whole assault of evil. He will rely on Allah to turn evil away from him, and praise Him alone for any success he achieves in his fight. It is only the ignorant who do not know man's weakness and Allah's strength!

34. So his Lord hearkened to him (in his prayer), and turned away from him their snare:(1683) Verily He heareth and knoweth (all things).

1683 Joseph was saved from the wiles of the women, which would have degraded him. But more, his truth and character were completely vindicated in the eyes of all concerned by the avowal of the wife of the 'Aziz. (R).

35. Then it occurred to the men(1684) after they had seen the signs, (that it was best) to imprison him for a time.

1684 When Joseph's character was completely vindicated, there was no disgrace on him in being sent to prison after that. On the contrary the blame now would attach to those who, for their own selfish motives, restricted his liberty for a time. As a matter of fact, various motives on the part of the many actors in this drama converged towards that end. For Joseph, prison was better than the importunities of the women, and now, not one woman, but all society women were after him. To the women themselves it looked as if that was a lever which they could use to force his compliance. Vain, deluded creatures, to think that a man of God could be forced from the path of rectitude by threats or bribes. To the 'Aziz it appears as if it might be in his wife's best interests that he should disappear from her view in prison. The decisive factor was the view of the men generally, who were alarmed at the consternation he had caused among the women. They knew that Joseph was righteous: they had seen the Signs of Allah in his wonderful personality and his calm and confident fortitude. But, it was argued, it was better that one man (even if righteous) should suffer in prison rather than that many should suffer from the extraordinary disturbance he was unwittingly causing in their social life. Not for the first nor for the last time did the righteous suffer plausibly for the guilt of the guilty. And so Joseph went to prison—for a time. (R).

36. Now with him there came into the prison two young men.(1685) Said one of them: "I see myself (in a dream) pressing wine." said the other: "I see myself (in a dream) carrying bread on my head, and birds are eating, thereof."(1686) "Tell us" (they said) "The truth and meaning thereof: for we see thou art one that doth good (to all)."(1687)

1685 Now opens another chapter in Joseph's life. The Plan of Allah develops. The wicked might plot; the weak might be swayed by specious arguments: but everything is used by the Universal Plan for its own beneficent purposes. Joseph must get into touch with the King, in order to work out the salvation of Egypt , and yet it must be through no obligation to smaller men. And he must diffuse his personality and teach the truth to men of all sorts in prison.

1686 Two men came to the prison about the same time as Joseph. They were both apparently officers of the king, who had incurred his wrath. One was a cupbearer (or butler or chief steward) whose duty was to prepare the king's wines and drinks. The other was the king's baker, whose duty was to prepare the king's bread. They were both in disgrace. The former dreamed that he was again carrying on his duties and pressing wine: the latter that he was carrying bread, but it did not reach his master, for the birds ate of it.

1687 Both these men saw the Signs of Allah about Joseph. They felt not only that he had wisdom, but that he was kind and benevolent, and would give of his wisdom even to strangers like themselves. They therefore told him their dreams and asked him to interpret them.

37. He said: "Before any food comes (in due course) to feed either of you, I will surely reveal to you the truth and meaning of this ere it befall you.(1688) That is part of the (Duty) which my Lord hath taught me.(1689) I have (I assure you) abandoned the ways of a people that believe not in Allah and that (even) deny the Hereafter.(1690)

1688 The dream of one foreboded good to him, and of the other, evil to him. It was good that each should prepare for his fate. But Joseph's mission was far higher than that of merely foretelling events. He must teach the truth of Allah and the faith in the Hereafter to both men. He does that first before he talks of the events of their phenomenal life. And yet he does it so tenderly. He does not tantalise them. In effect he says, 'You shall learn everything before our next meal, but let me first teach you Faith!"

1689 Joseph does not preach a pompous sermon, or claim any credit to himself for placing himself at their service. He is just doing his duty, and the highest good he can do to them is to teach them Faith.

1690 These men were Egyptians, perhaps steeped in materialism, idolatry, and polytheism. He must teach them the Gospel of Unity. And he does it simply, by appealing to his own experience: 1 have found the Lord good: in prosperity and adversity I have been supported by Faith: in life no man can live by error or evil: perhaps one of you has done some wrong for which you find yourself here: perhaps one of you is innocent: in either case, will you not accept Faith and live forever?

38. "And I follow the ways(1691) of my fathers,- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and never could we attribute any partners whatever to Allah. that (comes) of the grace of Allah to us and to mankind: yet most men are not grateful.

1691 *Again* the same note of personal modesty. 'You may think I am as young as you, or younger. Yes, but I have the heritage of great men renowned for wisdom and truth, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Surely what they knew is worthy of respect. Never did they swerve a hair's breadth from the Gospel of Unity. It is not that we boast. It was Allah's grace that taught us and Allah's grace is teaching all mankind. But men show their ingratitude by inventing other so-called gods.'

39. "O my two companions(1692) of the prison! (I ask you): are many lords differing among themselves better, or the One Allah, Supreme and Irresistible?

1692 Note the personal touch again. 'Are we not also companions in misfortune? And may I not speak to you on terms of perfect equality—as one prisoner to another? Well then, do you really think a conflict of heterogeneous gods is better than Allah, the One (and Only), Whose power is Supreme and Irresistible?" (R).

40. "If not Him, ye worship nothing but names which ye have named,-(1693) ye and your fathers,- for which Allah hath sent down no authority: the command is for none but Allah. He hath commanded that ye worship none but Him: that is the right religion, but most men understand not...

1693 'If you name other gods, they are nothing but your inventions—names which you and your fathers put forward without any reality behind them. Who gave you authority to do any such thing? The only reality is Allah. Authority can come from Him alone. It is only for Him to command. And He has distinctly commanded you to worship none other than Him. That is the only religion that is right—that has stood and will stand and endure forever. He has revealed it at all times by His Messengers and by His Signs. If men fail to understand, It is their own fault *(Cf.* 7:71, 13:33, and 53:23).

41. "O my two companions(1694) of the prison! As to one of you, he will pour out the wine for his lord to drink:(1695) as for the other, he will hang from the cross, and the birds will eat from off his head(1696). (So) hath been decreed that matter whereof ye twain do enquire"...

1694 Having fulfilled his great duty, that touching the things of the spirit, Joseph now passes on, and comes to the things in which they were immediately interested-the questions which they had asked him about their dreams and what they prognosticated of their immediate future. Notice how Joseph again puts himself into sympathy with them by repeating the phrase of camaraderie, "my two companions of the prison!" For one he has good news, and for the other, bad news. He does not mince matters or waste words. He just barely tells the truth, hoping that the higher spiritual truths of which he has spoken will appear in their eyes, too, as of more importance than mere earthly triumphs or disasters— (in Kipling's words) "both impostors all the same."

1695 The cupbearer had perhaps been proved innocent of the crime which had been charged against him, and was to be restored to the favour of the King. He was to carry the cup and be the king's confidant again. How much more good he could do now, after the spiritual influence he had imbibed from Joseph, the Prophet of Allah! He was more fortunate in having had Joseph's company than in being restored to his intimate position with the king! Yet he was not a perfect man, as we shall see presently.

1696 For the baker, alas! he had bad news, and he tells it directly without tantalising him. Perhaps he had been found guilty—perhaps he had been really guilty—of some act of embezzlement or of joining in some palace intrigue, and he was to die a malefactor's death on the cross, followed by exposure to birds of the air— vultures pecking away at his eyes and cheeks, and all that had been his face and head! Poor man! If he was guilty, Joseph had taught him repentance, and we should like to think that he lost in this life but gained in the next. If he was innocent, the cruel death did not affect him. Joseph had shown him a higher and more lasting hope in the Hereafter.

42. And of the two, to that one whom he consider about to be saved, he said: "Mention me to thy lord."(1697)

But Satan made him forget(1698) to mention him to his lord: and (Joseph) lingered in prison a few (more) years.(1699)

1697 Joseph never mentioned himself in interpreting the dream, nor ever thought of himself in his kindness to his fellow-sufferers in prison. It was afterwards, when the cupbearer's dream came true, and he was being released on being restored to favour, that we can imagine him taking an affectionate leave of Joseph, and even asking him in his elation if he could do anything for Joseph. Joseph had no need of earthly favours—least of all, from kings or their favourites. The divine grace was enough for him. But he had great work to do, which he could not do in prison—work for Egypt and her king, and the world at large. If the cupbearer could mention him to the king, not by way of recommendation, but because the king's own justice was being violated in keeping an innocent man in prison, perhaps that might help to advance the cause of the king and of Egypt And so he said, "Mention me to King."

1698 The eternal Plan does not put Allah's Prophets under obligations to men commanding mere worldly favour or earthly power. If they are given a chance, the obligation is on the worldly men, however highly placed. . . In this case, the poor cupbearer was but human. When he was in the midst of the Court, he forgot the poor fellow-prisoner languishing in prison. In this he yielded to the lower part of his nature, which is guided by Satan. (R).

1699 *A few (mare) years: bid'* in Arabic signifies a small indefinite number, say up to 3, 5, 7 or 9 years.

43. The king (of Egypt) said:(1700) "I do see (in a vision) seven fat kine, whom seven lean ones devour, and seven green ears of corn, and seven (others) withered. O ye chiefs! Expound to me my vision if it be that ye can interpret visions."

1700 The King is holding a Council. His confidential adviser the cupbearer is present. The King relates his double dream-of seven fat kine being devoured by seven lean ones, and of seven fine full green ears of corn (presumably being devoured) by seven dry withered ears.

44. They said: "A confused medley of dreams: and we are not skilled in the interpretation of dreams."(1701)

1701 No one in the Council apparently wanted to take the responsibility either of interpreting the dream, or of carrying out any measures consequent on the interpretation.

45. But the man who had been released, one of the two (who had been in prison) and who now bethought him after (so long) a space of time, said: "I will tell you the truth of its interpretation: send ye me (therefore)."(1702)

1702 At length the cupbearer's conscience was awakened. He thought of Joseph. He (Joseph) was a truthful man, and the cupbearer knew by personal experience how skillful he was in the interpretation of dreams. Perhaps he could get him released at this juncture by getting him to interpret the king's dream. If he had been frank, straight, and direct, he would have mentioned Joseph at once, and presented him to Pharaoh. But he had worldly subtlety. He wanted some credit for himself, at the same time that he fulfilled an old obligation. His petty conscience would be satisfied if he got Joseph's release, but meanwhile he wanted to see how much attention he could draw to himself in the court. So he just asked permission to withdraw in order to find the interpretation. He went straight to the prison, and addressed himself to Joseph, as in the following verse.

46. "O Joseph!" (he said) "O man of truth! Expound to us (the dream) of seven fat kine whom seven lean ones devour, and of seven green ears of corn and (seven) others withered: that I may return to the people, and that they may understand."(1703)

1703 The speech must have been longer, to explain the circumstances. We are just given the points. From Joseph he conceals nothing. He knows that Joseph knows more than himself. He tells Joseph that if he got the meaning, he would go and tell the Council. It would be impertinent for the cupbearer to hold out to Joseph, the Prophet of Allah, the bribe of the hope of his release. Notice how blandly he avoids referring to his own lapse in having forgotten Joseph so long, and how the magnanimous Joseph has not a word of reproach, but gets straight on with the interpretation. (R).

47. (Joseph) said: "For seven years shall ye diligently sow as is your wont: and the harvests that ye reap, ye shall leave them in the ear,-(1704) except a little, of which ye shall eat.

1704 Joseph not only shows what will happen, but, unasked, suggests the measures to be taken for dealing with the calamity when it conies. There will be seven years of abundant harvest. With diligent cultivation they should get bumper crops. Of them they should take a little for their sustenance and store the rest in-the-ear, the better to preserve it from the pests that attack corn heaps when they have passed through the threshing floor.

48. "Then will come after that (period) seven dreadful (years), which will devour what ye shall have laid by in advance for them,- (all) except a little(1705) which ye shall have (specially) guarded.

1705 There will follow seven years of dreadful famine, which will devour all the stores which they will have laid by in the good years. They must be careful, even during the famine, not to consume all the grain; they must by special arrangement save a little for seed, lest they should be helpless even when the Nile brought down abundant waters from the rains at its sources.

49. "Then will come after that (period) a year in which the people will have abundant water, and in which they will press (wine and oil)."(1706)

1706 This is a symbol of a very abundant year, following the seven years of drought The Nile must have brought abundant fertilising waters and silt from its upper reaches, and there was probably some rain also in Lower Egypt . The vine and the olive trees, which must have suffered in the drought, now revived, and yielded their juice and their oil; among the annuals, also, the oil seeds, such as linseed, sesame, and the castor oil plant, must have been grown, as there was irrigated land to spare from the abundant grain crops. And the people's spirits revived, to enjoy the finer products of the earth, when their absolute necessities had been more than met in their grain crops.

50. So the king said: "Bring ye him unto me."(1707) But when the messenger came to him, (Joseph) said: "Go thou back to thy lord, and ask him, ´What is the state of mind of the ladies who cut their hands´?(1708) For my Lord is certainly well aware of their snare."(1709)

1707 The cupbearer must have reported Joseph's interpretation to the king, and the king naturally wanted to see Joseph himself. He sent a messenger to fetch him.

1708 The king's messenger must have expected that a prisoner would be only too overjoyed at the summons of the king. But Joseph, sure of himself, wanted some assurance that he would be safe from the sort of nagging and persecution to which he had been subjected by the ladies. We saw in verse 33 above that he preferred prison to their solicitations. He must therefore know what was in the mind of the women now.

1709 If the king ("thy lord") did not know of all the snares which had been laid for Joseph by the ladies, Allah ("my Lord") knew all their secret motives and plots.

51. (The king) said (to the ladies): "What was your affair when ye did seek to seduce Joseph from his (true) self?"(1710) The ladies said: "(Allah) preserve us! no evil know we against him!" Said the ´Aziz´s wife: "Now is the truth manifest (to all): it was I who sought to seduce him from his (true) self: He is indeed of those who are (ever) true (and virtuous).(1711)

1710 Joseph's message was conveyed by the messenger to the king, who sent for the ladies concerned. Among them came the wife of *'Aziz*. "What was this affair?" said the king: "tell me the whole truth." (R).

1711 The wife of the 'Aziz stood by, while the other ladies answered. Their answer was grudgingly acknowledging the truth of Joseph's innocence and high principles, but holding a discreet silence about their own part in egging on the 'Aziz's wife to sin, wrongdoing and revenge. When they had done, she began. She did not mince matters. She acknowledged her own guilt, freely and frankly. This was no time for her even to refer to other ladies-their jealousy, their gross mindedness, their encouragement of all that was frail or evil in herself.

52. "This (say I), in order that He may know that I have never been false to him in his absence, and that Allah will never guide the snare of the false ones.(1712)

1712 I Construe verses 52 and 53 to be a continuation of the speech of the 'Aziz's wife and have translated accordingly. There is both good reason and authority *(e.g.,* Ibn Kathir) for this. But the majority of Commentators construe verses 52-53 to be spoken by Joseph, in which case they would mean that Joseph was referring to his fidelity to the 'Aziz, that he had never taken advantage of his absence to play false with his wife, although he (Joseph) was human and liable to err. In my view the 'Aziz's wife while fully reprobating her own guilty conduct, claims that she has at least been constant, and that she hopes for mercy, forgiveness, and the capacity to understand at last what true love is. Whatever false charge she made, she made it in a moment of passion and to his face, (never in cold blood, or behind his back). *Guide the snare of the false ones, i.e.,* allow such snare to attain its goal. (R).

53. "Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil,(1712-A) unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely my Lord is Oft- forgiving, Most Merciful."(1713)

1712-A *Ammarah:* prone, impelling, headstrong, passionate. See n. 5810 to 75:2.

1713 See n. 1712.1 construe this verse to be a continuation of the speech of the wife of the 'Aziz. It is more appropriate to her than to Joseph. (R).

54. So the king said: "Bring him unto me;(1714) I will take him specially to serve about my own person." Therefore when he had spoken to him, he said: "Be assured this day, thou art, before our own presence, with rank firmly established, and fidelity fully proved!(1715)

1714 Joseph had not yet appeared before the king. The king's order in the same terms in verse 50 above had led to a message from Joseph and the subsequent public proceedings with the ladies. Now that Joseph's innocence, wisdom, truth, and trustworthiness had been proved, and confirmed by the splendid tribute of the courtier's wife, and Joseph's own manly bearing before the king, the king was much impressed, and took him specially to serve about his own person as his trusty and confidential Wazir. If, as is probable, the 'Aziz had by this time died (for he is never mentioned again) Joseph succeeded to his office, and he is addressed as 'Aziz, in verse 78 below. But Joseph got more than his rank and powers, as specially selected to carry out a great emergency policy to meet the very difficult times of depression that were foretold. He was given plenary powers and the fullest confidence that a king could give to his most trusted and best-proved Wazir or Prime Minister, with special access to his Person, like a Grand Chamberlain. (R).

1715 Who was this Pharaoh, and what approximate date could we assign to him? He was probably a king of the Hyksos Dynasty, somewhere between the 19th and the 17th century B.C. See Appendix IV, on Egyptian Chronology and Israel (printed after S. 7).

55. (Joseph) said: "Set me over the storehouses(1716) of the land: I will indeed guard them, as one that knows (their importance)."

1716 Joseph had been given plenary authority by the king. He could have enjoyed his dignity, drawn his emoluments, put the hard and perhaps unpopular work on the shoulders of others, and kept to himself the glitter and the kudos. But that was not his way, nor can it indeed be the way of anyone who wants to do real service. He undertook the hardest and most unpopular task himself. Such a task was that of organising reserves in times of plenty, against the lean years to come. He deliberately asked to be put in charge of the granaries and storehouses, and the drudgery of establishing them and guarding them, for the simple reason that he understood that need better than anyone else, and was prepared to take upon himself rather than throw on to another the obloquy of restricting supplies in times of plenty.

56. Thus did We give established power to Joseph in the land, to take possession(1717) therein as, when, or where he pleased. We bestow of our Mercy on whom We please, and We suffer not, to be lost, the reward of those who do good.

1717 What a wonderful example of the working of divine Providence ! The boy whom his jealous brothers got rid of by throwing him down into a well, and late was sold into slavery for a miserable price becomes the most trusted dignitary in a foreign land, chief minister in one of the greatest empires of the world of that day. And this not for himself only, but for his family, for the world at large, and for that noble example of righteousness and strenuous service, which he was to set for all time. According to tradition, Joseph's age was barely 30 at that time!

As, when, or where he pleased: haythu refers to manner, time, or place. He had almost absolute powers, but as his fidelity was fully proved (12:53) these powers were for service rather than for self. (R).

57. But verily the reward of the Hereafter is the best, for those who believe, and are constant in righteousness.(1718)

1718 To die righteous, whatever rewards (if any) (hat come in this world are welcome for the opportunities of service which they open out. But the true and best reward is in the Hereafter.

58. Then came Joseph´s brethren:(1719) they entered his presence, and he knew them, but they knew him not.

1719 Years pass; the times of prosperity go by; famine holds the land in its grip, and it extends to neighbouring countries. Joseph's preparations are complete. His reserves are ample to meet the calamity. Not only does Egypt bless him, but neighbouring countries send to Egypt to purchase corn. All are received with hospitality, and corn is sold to them according to judicious measure. Now there has been one sorrow gnawing at Joseph's heart. His poor father Jacob! How he must have wept, as indeed he did, at the loss of his beloved Joseph! And Joseph's little brother Benjamin, born of the same mother as himself; would the other ten brothers, not by the same mother, have any affection for him, or would they treat him, as they treated Joseph? How would the whole family be in these hard times? A sort of answer came when the ten selfish brothers, driven by famine, came from Canaan to buy corn. Joseph, though so great a man, kept the details of the famine department in his own hands: otherwise there might have been waste. But to the public he was a mighty Egyptian administrator, probably in Egyptian dress, and with all the paraphernalia of his rank about him. When his brothers came, he knew them, but they did not know he was Joseph. In their thoughts Joseph was probably some menial slave in a remote household, perhaps already starved to death in these hard times! *(Cf.* 12:15).

59. And when he had furnished them forth with provisions (suitable) for them, he said: "Bring unto me a brother ye have, of the same father as yourselves, (but a different mother): see ye not that I pay out full measure, and that I do provide the best hospitality?(1720)

1720 Joseph treated his brothers liberally. Perhaps he condescended to enter into conversation with these strangers, and enquired about their family. The ten brothers had come. Had they left a father behind them? What sort of a person was he? Very aged? Well, of course he could not come. Had they any other brothers? Doubtless the ten brothers said nothing about their lost Joseph, or told some lie about him. But perhaps their host's kindly insistence brought Benjamin into the conversation. How old was he? Why had they not brought him? Would they bring him next time? Indeed they must, or they would get no more corn, and he—the great Egyptian Wazir—would not even see them.

60. "Now if ye bring him not to me, ye shall have no measure (of corn) from me, nor shall ye (even) come near me."

61. They said: "We shall certainly seek to get our wish about him from his father:(1721) Indeed we shall do it."

1721 The brother said: "Certainly, we shall try to beg him for our father, and bring him away with us: we shall certainly comply with your desire." In reality they probably loved Benjamin no more than they loved Joseph. But they must get food when the present supply was exhausted, and they must humour the great Egyptian Wazir. Note that they do not call Jacob "our father" but "his father": how little they loved their aged father, whom they identified with Joseph and Benjamin! Their trial and their instruction in their duties is now being undertaken by Joseph.

62. And (Joseph) told his servants to put their stock in trade(1722) (with which they had bartered) into their saddle-bags, so they should know it only when they returned to their people, in order that they might come back.(1723)

1722 *Bida'ah:* stock in trade; capital with which business is carried on; money when it is used as capital for trade. It is better here to suppose that they were bartering goods for grain. *Cf.* 12:19 .

1723 It was more important for Joseph's plan that they should come back. If they came back at all, they could not come without Benjamin after what he had told them. As an additional incentive to their coming back, he returns the price of the grain in such a way that they should find it in their saddlebags when they reach home.

63. Now when they returned to their father, they said: "O our father! No more measure of grain shall we get (unless we take our brother): So send our brother with us, that we may get our measure; and we will indeed take every care of him."(1724)

1724 On their return they no doubt told Jacob all that had transpired. But to beg Benjamin of him was no easy matter, as Jacob did not trust them and had no cause to trust them after their treatment of Joseph.

So they use the argument of urgent necessity for all it is worth.

64. He said: "Shall I trust you with him with any result other than when I trusted you with his brother aforetime? But Allah is the best to take care (of him), and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!"(1725)

1725 I construe Jacob's answer to be a flat refusal to let Benjamin go with them. It would be like the former occasion when he trusted Joseph with them and they lost him. Did they talk of taking care of him? The only protection that he trusted was that of Allah. He at least showed mercy to old and young alike. Did man show mercy? Witness his sad old age and his lost little Joseph! Would they bring down "his grey hairs with sarrow to the grave?"

65. Then when they opened their baggage, they found their stock-in-trade had been returned to them. They said: "O our father! What (more) can we desire? this our stock-in-trade has been returned(1726) to us: so we shall get (more) food for our family; We shall take care of our brother; and add (at the same time) a full camel´s load (of grain to our provisions). This is but a small quantity."(1727)

1726 The ten brothers did not take their father's refusal as final. They opened their saddlebags, and found that the price they had paid for their provisions had been returned to them. They had got the grain free! What more could they desire? The spell which Joseph had woven now worked. If they only went back, this kind Wazir would give more grain if they pleased him. And the only way to please him was to take back their younger brother with them. It would cost them nothing. Judging by past experience they would get a whole camel's load of rain now. And so they stated their case to the aged father.

1727 Two meanings are possible—either or perhaps both. 'What we have brought now is nothing compared to what we shall get if we humour the whim of the Egyptian Wazir . And, moreover, Egypt seems to have plenty of grain stored up. What is a camel-load to her WazTr to give away?'

66. (Jacob) said: "Never will I send him with you until ye swear a solemn oath to me, in Allah.s name, that ye will be sure to bring him back to me unless ye are yourselves hemmed in (and made powerless).(1728) And when they had sworn their solemn oath, he said: "Over all that we say, be Allah the Witness and Guardian!"(1729)

1728 The appeal to the family's needs in the time of famine at length made Jacob relent, but he exacted a solemn promise from the brothers, under the most religious sanctions, that they would bring Benjamin back to him, unless they were themselves prevented, as the Insurance Policies say "by an act of God," so that they became really powerless. To that promise Jacob called Allah to witness.

1729 This is more than a formula. Allah is invoked as present and witnessing the bargain, and to Him both parties make over the affair to arrange and fulfil.

67. Further he said: "O my sons! enter not(1730) all by one gate: enter ye by different gates. Not that I can profit you aught against Allah (with my advice): None can command except Allah. On Him do I put my trust: and let all that trust put their trust on Him."

1730 The Commentators refer to a J ewish (or Eastern) custom (or superstition) which forbade members of a numerous family to go together in a mass for fear of "the evil eye". But apart from East or West, or custom or superstition, it would be ridiculous for any large family of ten or eleven to parade together in a procession among strangers. But there was even a better reason in this particular case, which made Jacob's advice sound, and Jacob was, as stated in the next verse, a man of knowledge and experience. Here were eleven strangers dressed alike, in a dress not of the country, talking a strange language, coming in a time of stress, on an errand for which they had no credentials. Would they not attract undue attention and suspicion if they went together? Would they not be taken for spies?—or for men bent on some mischief, theft, or organised crime? Such a suspicion is referred to in verse 73 below. By entering separately they would attract little attention. Jacob very wisely tells them to take all human precautions. But like a Prophet of Allah he warns them that human precautions would be no good if they neglect or run counter to far weightier matters—Allah's Will and Law. Above all, they must try to understand and obey this, and their trust should be on Allah rather than on human usages, institutions, or precautions, however, good and reasonable these might be *(Cf.* 39:58). (R).

68. And when they entered in the manner their father had enjoined, it did not profit them in the least against (the plan of) Allah:(1731) It was but a necessity of Jacob´s soul, which he(1732) discharged. For he was, by our instruction, full of knowledge (and experience): but most men know not.(1733)

1731 See the last verse and n. 1730. Though they scrupulously observed their father's injunctions to the letter, their hearts were not yet pure, and they got into trouble, as the later story will show. They had the hardihood to cast aspersions on Joseph, not knowing that they were in Joseph's power. And Joseph took a noble revenge by planning a reunion of the whole family and shaming the ten brothers into repentance. He was the instrument for the fulfilment of Allah's Plan.

1732 It is a necessity of a Prophet's soul that he should speak out and teach all that he knows, to the worthy and unworthy alike. This, Jacob did to his unworthy sons, as well as to his worthy sons whom he loved best. It was not for him as a Prophet to guarantee any results. In this case he could not save his Sons from getting into trouble merely because they followed the letter of his advice in a small matter. Apply this to the teaching of one who is greater than Jacob. Men who literally observe some small injunctions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and neglect the greater principles which he taught cannot blame him for their troubles and difficulties. If they examined the matter, they would find that they brought the troubles on themselves.

1733 The Prophets of Allah are full of knowledge—not as men, but as taught by the grace of Allah, for men, as such, are (as Carlyle said) mostly fools—devoid of knowledge and understanding. (R).

69. Now when they came into Joseph´s presence,(1734) he received his (full) brother(1735) to stay with him. He said (to him): "Behold! I am thy (own) brother; so grieve not at aught of their doings."(1736)

1734 The ten brothers, with Benjamin, arrived in Egypt , and waited on the great Wazir. Joseph again received them hospitably, even more so than before, as they had complied with his request to bring Benjamin. No doubt many shrewd and probing questions were asked by Joseph, and no doubt it was clear that Benjamin was one apart from the other ten. Baydawi fills up the picture of the great feast for us. The guests were seated two by two. Benjamin was the odd one, and Joseph courteously took him to his own table.

1735 After the feast the questions of lodgings arose. They were to be accommodated two by two. Again Benjamin was the odd one. What more natural than the Wazir should take him to himself? He thus got a chance of privacy with him. He disclosed his identity to him, charging him to keep it a secret, and to take no notice of any strange doings that might occur. He must have learnt from Benjamin about his father and about the inner doings of the family. He must get them all together into Egypt under his own eye. He had a plan, and he proceeded to put it into execution.

1736 The past tense of *kanu,* combined with the aorist of *ya'malun,* signifies that the reference is to their brothers' doings, past, present, and future. Benjamin was not to mind what wrongs they had done in the past, or how they behaved in the present or the immediate future. Joseph had a plan that required Benjamin's silence in strange circumstances.

70. At length when he had furnished them forth with provisions (suitable) for them, he put the drinking cup

into his brother´s saddle-bag. Then shouted out a crier: "O ye (in) the caravan! behold! ye are thieves, without doubt!"(1737)

1737 Joseph's plan was to play a practical joke on them, which would achieve two objects. Immediately it would put them into some consternation, but nothing comparable to what he had suffered at their hands. When the plan was unravelled, it would make them thoroughly ashamed of themselves, and dramatically bring home their guilt to them. Secondly, it would give him an excuse to detain Benjamin and bring their aged father into Egypt . He contrived that a valuable drinking cup should be concealed in Benjamin's saddlebag. When it was found after an ostentatious search, he would detain the supposed culprit, and attain his object, as the story relates further on.

71. They said, turning towards them: "What is it that ye miss?"

72. They said: "We miss the great beaker of the king; for him who produces it, is (the reward of) a camel load; I will be bound by it."

73. (The brothers) said: "By Allah. well ye know that we came not to make mischief in the land, and we are no thieves!"(1738)

1738 As strangers in a strange land, they were liable to be suspected as spies or men who meditated some unlawful design, or some crime, such as theft, which would be common in a season of scarcity. The brothers protested against the absurdity of such a suspicion after they had been entertained so royally by the Wazir.

74. (The Egyptians) said: "What then shall be the penalty of this, if ye are (proved) to have lied?"(1739)

1739 "That might be all very well," said the Egyptians, "but what if it is found by a search that you have in fact abused the Wazir's hospitality by stealing a valuable cup?"

75. They said: "The penalty should be that he in whose saddle-bag it is found, should be held (as bondman) to atone(1740) for the (crime). Thus it is we punish the wrongdoers!"(1741)

1740 We must try to picture to ourselves the mentality of the ten. They understood each other perfectly, in their sins as well as in other things. For themselves, the search held out no fears. Besides they had had no opportunity of stealing. But what of that young fellow Benjamin? They were ready to believe anything against him, the more so as the Wazir's partiality for him had lent a keen edge to their jealousy. Judging by their own standards, they would not be surprised if he had stolen, seeing that he had had such opportunities — sitting at the High Table and staying with the Wazir. They felt very self-righteous at the same time that they indulged in the luxury of accusing in their thoughts the most innocent of men! Supposing he had stolen, here would be a fine opportunity of getting rid of him. What about their solemn oath to their father? Oh! that was covered by the exception. He had done for himself. They had done all they could to protect him, but they were powerless. The old man could come and see for himself,

1741 This was their family custom. It was of course long anterior to the Mosaic Law, which laid down full restitution for theft, and if the culprit had nothing, he was to be sold for his theft (Exod. xxii. 3). But here the crime was more than theft. It was theft, lying, and the grossest abuse of confidence and hospitality. While the ten felt a secret satisfaction in suggesting the penalty, they were unconsciously carrying out Joseph's plan. Thus the vilest motives often help in carrying out the most beneficent plans.

76. So he(1742) began (the search) with their baggage, before (he came to) the baggage(1743) of his brother: at length he brought it(1744) out of his brother´s baggage. Thus did We plan for Joseph. He could not take his brother by the law of the king except that Allah(1745) willed it (so). We raise to degrees (of wisdom) whom(1746) We please: but over all endued with knowledge is one, the All-Knowing.

1742 The pronoun "he" can only refer to Joseph. He may have been present all the time, or he may just have come up, as the supposed theft of the king's own cup (12:72 above) was a very serious and important affair, and the investigation required his personal supervision. All that his officers did by his orders was his own act. As the lawyers say: *Qui facit per alium, facit per se* (whoever does anything through another, does it himself).

1743 The Arabic word here used is wia', plural *aw'iyah,* which includes bags, lockers, boxes, or any receptacles in which things are stored. Notice the appropriateness of the words used. The cup was concealed in a saddlebag *(rahl)* , verse 70 above. When it comes to searching, they must search *all the* baggage of every description if the search was to be convincing and effective.

1744 It refers to the drinking cup, the siqayah, which is a feminine noun: hence the feminine pronoun, ha, in Arabic.

1745 Let no one suppose that it was a vulgar or wicked trick, such as we sometimes hear of in police courts, when property is planted on innocent men to get them into trouble. On the contrary, it was a device or stratagem whose purpose was to show up wickedness in its true colours, to give it a chance of repentance, to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation, to give solace to the aged father who had suffered so much, and above all, to further that larger plan for the instruction of the world, which is unfolded in Israel's religious history. Joseph was a Prophet of Allah, but he could not have carried out this plan or taken the first step, of detaining his brother, except with the will and permission of Allah, Whose Plan is universal and for all His creatures. (R).

1746 If we examine this world's affairs, there are all sorts of plans, and all degrees of folly and wisdom. The wicked ones plan; the foolish ones plan; the simple ones plan; then there are men who think themselves wise and are perhaps thought to be wise, but who are foolish, and they have their plans: and there are degrees of real and beneficent wisdom among men. Allah, the Universal Planner, is above all. Anything good in our wisdom is but a reflection of His wisdom, and His wisdom can even turn folly and wickedness to good.

77. They said: "If he steals, there was a brother of his who did steal before (him)."(1747) But these things did Joseph keep locked in his heart, revealing not the secrets to them.(1748) He (simply) said (to himself): "Ye are the worse situated;(1749) and Allah knoweth best the truth of what ye assert!"

1747 The hatred of the ten for Joseph and Benjamin comes out again. They are not only ready to believe evil of Benjamin, but they carry their thoughts back to Joseph and call him a thief as well. They had injured Joseph; and by a false charge of this kind they salve their conscience. Little did they suspect that Joseph was before them, under another guise, and their falsehood and treachery, would soon be exposed.

1748 There were many secrets: (1) that he was Joseph himself; (2) that his brother, Benjamin, knew him; (3) that there was no guilt in Benjamin, but the whole practical joke was in furtherance of a great plan (see n. 1745 above); (4) that they were giving themselves away, and were unconsciously facilitating the plan, though their motives were not aboveboard.

1749 "Ah!" thought Joseph, "you think that Benjamin is safely out of the way, and that Joseph was got rid of long since! Would you be surprised to know that you have given yourselves away, that you are now in the power of Joseph, and that Joseph is the very instrument of your exposure and (let us hope) of your repentance?"

78. They said: "O exalted one!(1750) Behold! he has a father, aged and venerable, (who will grieve for him); so take one of us in his place; for we see that thou art (gracious) in doing good."

1750 I have translated the tide of *'Aziz here* as "the exalted one" when addressed to Joseph in order not to cause confusion with the other man, the 'Aziz, the Courtier, who had bought Joseph on arrival in Egypt . See 12:30 above, and notes 1677 and 1714. (R).

79. He said: "(Allah) forbid that we take other than him with whom we found our property: indeed (if we did so), we should be acting wrongfully.(1751)

1751 There is a little sparring now between the Ten and Joseph. They are afraid of meeting their father's wrath, and he holds them strictly to the bargain which they had themselves suggested.

80. Now when they saw no hope of his (yielding), they held a conference in private. The leader among them said:(1752) "Know ye not that your father did take an oath from you in Allah's name, and how, before this, ye did fail in your duty with Joseph? Therefore will I

not leave this land until my father permits me, or Allah(1753) commands me; and He is the best to command.

1752 *Kabir may* mean the eldest. But in 12:78 above, *Kabir is* distinguished from *Shaykh,* and I have translated the one as "venerable" and the other as "aged". In 20:71, *Kabir obviously* means "leader" or "chief, and has no reference to age. I therefore translate here by the word "leader", that brother among them who took the most active part in these transactions. His name is not given in the Qur'an. The eldest brother was Reuben. But according to the biblical story the brother who had taken the most active part in this transaction was Judah, one of the elder brothers, being the fourth son, after Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, and of the same mother as these. It was Judah who stood surety to Jacob for Benjamin (Gen. 43:9). It is therefore natural that Judah should, as here, offer to stay behind.

1753 The pledge he had given was to his father, and in Allah's name. Therefore he was bound both to his father, and to Allah. He must await his father's order and remain here as pledged, unless Allah opened out some other way. For example the Egyptian WazTr might relent: if so, he could go back with Benjamin to his father, and his pledge would be satisfied.

81. "Turn ye back to your father, and say, ´O our father! behold! thy son committed theft! we bear witness only to what we know, and we could not well guard against the unseen!(1754)

1754 'He stole in secret and without our knowledge. How could we in the circumstances prevent it? 1 This may have been a good statement for the other nine brothers, but Judah was himself personally and specially pledged.

82. "´Ask at the town where we have been and the caravan in which we returned, and (you will find) we are indeed telling the truth.´"(1755)

1755 To vouch for the truth of the story, the nine brothers are asked by Judah to appeal to their father to enquire at the place where they stayed and the caravan with which they came, and he would find that the facts were as they stated them. The nine brothers came back and told their father as they had been instructed by Judah .

83. Jacob said: "Nay, but ye have yourselves contrived a story (good enough) for you. (1756)So patience is most fitting (for me). Maybe Allah will bring them (back) all to me (in the end).(1757) For He is indeed full of knowledge and wisdom."

1756 Jacob was absolutely stunned by the story. He knew his darling little Benjamin too well to believe that he had committed theft. He flatly refused to believe it, and called it a cock-and-bull story, which indeed it was, though not in the sense in which he reproached the nine brothers. With the eye of faith he saw clearly the innocence of Benjamin, though he did not see every detail of what had happened.

1757 With the eye of faith he clung to even a larger hope. Perhaps all three of his lost sons would come back—Joseph, Benjamin, and Judah. His faith in Allah was unswerving, although alas! the present facts altogether unnerved him. (R).

84. And he turned away from them, and said: "How great is my grief for Joseph!" And his eyes became white(1758) with sorrow, and he fell into silent melancholy.

1758 The old father's grief is indescribable. Yet with what master-strokes it is described here! One sorrow brings up the memory of another and a greater one. 'Benjamin is now gone! Oh but Joseph! his pretty dream of boyhood! his greatness foretold! and now how dark was the world! If he could but weep! Tears might give relief, and his red and swollen eyes might yet regain their Light!' But his grief was too deep for tears. His eyes lost their colour, and became a dull white. The light became a mere blur, a white glimmer. Darkness seemed Co cover everything. So it was in the outside world. So was it in his mind. His grief was unshared, unexpressed, and uncomplaining. Who could share it? Who could understand it? He bore his sorrow in silence. Yet his faith was undimmed, and he trimmed the lamp of patience, that sovereign virtue for those who have faith.

85. They said: "By Allah. (never) wilt thou cease to remember Joseph until thou reach the last extremity of illness, or until thou die!"(1759)

1759 A speech full of jealousy, taunting malice, and lack of understanding—one that would have driven mad anyone less endowed with patience and wisdom than was Jacob, the Prophet of Allah. It shows that the sons were still unregenerate, though the time of their repentance and reclamation was drawing nigh. The cruel heartlessness of their words is particularly out of place, as Jacob bore his sorrow in silence and complained to no mortal, but poured out his distraction and grief only to Allah, as stated in the next verse.

86. He said: "I only complain(1760) of my distraction and anguish to Allah, and I know from Allah(1761) that which ye know not...

1760 Jacob's plaint to Allah is about himself, not about Allah's doings. He bewails the distraction of his mind and his occasional breaking out of those bounds of patience which he had set for himself.

1761 He knew of Allah's merciful and beneficent dealings with man in a way his shallow sons did not. And his perfect faith in Allah also told him that all would be well. He never gave up hope for Joseph, as his directions in the next verse show. They may be supposed to have been spoken after a little silence of grief and thought. That silence I have indicated in punctuation by three dots.

87. "O my sons! go ye and enquire about Joseph and his brother, and never give up hope of Allah's Soothing Mercy:(1762) truly no one despairs of Allah's Soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith."(1763)

1762 The word is *rawh,* not *ruh,* as some translators have mistakenly construed it. *Rawh* includes the idea of a Mercy that stills or calms our distracted state, and is particularly appropriate here in the mouth of Jacob.

1763 Jacob ignores and forgives the sting and malice in the speech of his sons, and like a true Prophet of Allah, still wishes them well, gives them sound advice, and sends them on an errand which is to open their eyes to the wonderful ways of Providence as much as it will bring consolation to his own distressed soul. He asks them to go again in search of Joseph and Benjamin. Perhaps by now he had an idea that they might be together in Egypt . In any case their stock of grain is again low, and they must seek its replenishment in Egypt . (R).

88. Then, when they came (back) into (Joseph´s) presence(1764) they said: "O exalted one! distress has seized us and our family: we have (now) brought but scanty capital: so pay us full measure, (we pray thee), and treat it as charity to us: for Allah doth reward the charitable."

1764 The nine brothers come back to Egypt according to their father's direction. Their first care is to see the WazTr. They must tell him of all their father's distress and excite his pity, if perchance he might release Benjamin. They would describe the father's special mental distress as well as the distress which was the common lot of all in famine time. They had spent a great part of their capital and stock in trade. They would appeal to his charity. It might please so great a man, the absolute governor of a wealthy state. And they did so. Perhaps they mentioned their father's touching faith, and that brought Joseph out of his shell, as in the next verse.

89. He said: "Know ye how ye dealt with Joseph(1765) and his brother, not knowing (what ye were doing)?"

1765 Joseph now wants to reveal himself and touch their conscience. He had but to remind them of the true facts as to their treatment of their brother Joseph, whom they pretended to have lost. He had by now also learnt from Benjamin what slights and injustice he too had suffered at their hands after Joseph's protection had been removed from him in their home. Had not Joseph himself seen them but too prone to believe the worst of Benjamin and to say the worst of Joseph? But Joseph would be chari table-not only in the sense which they meant when they asked for a charitable grant of grain, but in a far higher sense. He would forgive them and put the most charitable construction on what they did-that they knew not what they were doing!

90. They said: "Art thou indeed(1766) Joseph?" He said, "I am Joseph, and this is my brother: Allah has indeed been gracious to us (all): behold, he that is righteous and patient,- never will Allah suffer the reward to be lost, of those who do right."

1766 Their father's words, the way events were shaping themselves, Joseph's questionings, perhaps Benjamin's manner now-not a slave kept in subjection but one in perfect love and understanding with this great Wazir-perhaps also a recollection of Joseph's boyish dream-all these things had prepared their minds

and they ask the direct question. "Art thou Joseph?" They get the direct reply. "Yes. I am Joseph; and if you have still any doubt of my identity, here is Benjamin: ask him. We have suffered much, but patience and right conduct are at last rewarded by Allah!"

91. They said: "By Allah. indeed has Allah preferred thee above us, and we certainly have been guilty of sin!"(1767)

1767 The scales fall from the eyes of the brothers. We may suppose that they had joined Judah at this interview, and perhaps what Judah had seen when he was alone helped in the process of their enlightenment. They are convicted of sin out of their own mouths, and now there is no *arrier pensee,* no reserve thought, in their minds. They freely confess their wrongdoing, and the justice of Joseph's preferment.

92. He said: "This day let no reproach be (cast)(1768) on you: Allah will forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!

1768 Joseph is most generous. He is glad that they have at last seen the significance of what happened. But he will not allow them at this great moment of reconciliation to dwell on their conduct with reproaches against themselves. There is more urgent work to do. An aged and beloved father is eating out his heart in far Canaan in love and longing for his Joseph, and he must be told all immediately, and "comforted in body, mind, and estate," and so he tells the brothers to hurry back immediately with his shirt as a sign of recognition, as a proof of these wonderful happenings.

93. "Go with this my shirt,(1769) and cast it over the face of my father: he will come to see (clearly). Then come ye (here) to me together with all your family."

1769 It will be remembered that they had covered their crime by taking his shirt, putting on the stains of blood, and pretending that he had been killed by a wolf: see above, 12:17 -18. Now that they have confessed their crime and been forgiven, and they have joyful news to tell Jacob about Joseph. Joseph gives them another shirt of his to prove the truth of their story. It is a rich shirt, befitting a ruler of Egypt , to prove his good fortune, and yet perhaps its design and many colours (12:18. n. 1651) were reminiscent of the lost Joseph. The first shirt plunged Jacob into grief This one will now restore him. See the verses following.

94. When the caravan left (Egypt), their father said: "I do indeed scent the presence of Joseph:(1770) Nay, think me not a dotard."

1770 Literally, 'I feel the scent, or the air, or the atmosphere or the breath of Joseph'; for rih h as all these significations. Or we might translate, 'I feel the presence of Joseph in the air'. When a long-lost friend is about to be found or heard of, many people have a sort of presentiment of it, which they call telepathy. In Jacob's case it was more definite. He had always had faith that Joseph was living and that his dream would be realised. Now that faith was proved true by his own sons; they had been undutiful, and hard, and ignorant; and circumstances had converged to prove it to them by ocular demonstration. Jacob's soul was more sensitive. No wonder he knew already before the news was actually brought to him.

95. They(1771) said: "By Allah. truly thou art in thine old wandering mind."

1771 "They" must be the people around him, before the brothers actually arrived. These same brothers had sedulously cultivated the calumny that their father was an old dotard, and everybody around believed it, even after its authors had to give it up. Thus lies die hard, once they get a start.

96. Then when the bearer(1772) of the good news came, He cast (the shirt) over his face, and he forthwith(1773) regained clear sight.(1774) He said: "Did I not say to you, ´I know from Allah that which ye know not?´"(1775)

1772 We may suppose this to have been Judah (see notes 1752 and 1753 above) who was pledged to his father for Benjamin, and who could now announce the good news not only of Benjamin but of Joseph. We can imagine him hurrying forward, to be the first to tell the news, though the plural pronoun for those whom Jacob addresses in this verse, and for those who reply in the next verse, shows that all the brothers practically arrived together.

1773 The particle *fa* ("then") has here the force of "forthwith".

1774 Jacob's sight had grown dim; his eyes had become white with much sorrow for Joseph (see 12:84 above). Both his physical and mental vision now became clear and bright as before.

1775 He had said this (12:86) when everything was against him, and his sons were scoffers. Now they themselves have come to say that his faith was justified and his vision was true.

97. They said: "O our father! ask for us forgiveness for our sins, for we were truly at fault."

98. He said: "Soon(1776) will I ask my Lord for forgiveness for you: for he is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

1776 He fully intended to do this, but the most injured party was Joseph, and it was only fair that Joseph should be consulted. In fact Joseph had already forgiven his brothers all their past, and his father could confidently look forward to Joseph joining in the wish of the whole family to turn to Allah through their aged father Jacob

in his prophetic office .

99. Then when they entered(1777) the presence of Joseph, he provided a home for his parents with himself, and said: "Enter ye(1778) Egypt (all) in safety if it please Allah."

1777 At length the whole family arrived in Egypt and were reunited with Joseph. They were all entertained and provided with homes. But the parents were treated with special honour, as was becoming both to Joseph's character and ordinary, family ethics. His mother Rachel had long been dead, but he had been brought up by his mother's sister eah, whom his father had also married. Leah was now his mother. They were lodged with Joseph himself.

1778 This is in Arabic in the plural, not in the dual number. The welcome is for all to Egypt , and under the auspices of the Wazir of Egypt. They came, therefore, under Allah's will, to a double sense of security: Egypt was secure from the famine unlike the neighbouring countries; and they were to be cared for by the highest in the land.

100. And he raised his parents high on the throne (of dignity),(1779) and they fell down in prostration, (all) before him.(1779-A) He said: "O my father! this is the fulfilment of my vision of old! Allah hath made it come true! He was indeed good to me when He took me out of prison and brought you (all here)(1780) out of the desert, (even) after Satan had sown enmity between me and my brothers. Verily my Lord understandeth best the mysteries of all that He planneth to do, for verily He is full of knowledge and wisdom.

1779 Certainly metaphorically: probably also literally. By Eastern custom the place of honour at a ceremonial reception is on a seat on a dais, with a special cushion of honour, such as is assigned to a bridegroom at his reception. To show his high respect for his parents, Joseph made them sit on a throne of dignity. On the other hand, his parents and his brothers—all performed the ceremony of prostration before Joseph in recognition of his supreme rank in Egypt under the Pharaoh, And thus was fulfilled the dream or vision of his youth (12:4 above, and n. 1633).

1779-A The ceremony of prostration for paying respect might have been allowed at the time of previous prophets, but with the advent of the complete and final revelation prostration before anyone other than Allah is a grave sin strictly prohibited. (Eds.).

1780 1780

101. "O my Lord! Thou hast indeed bestowed on me some power, and taught me something of the interpretation(1781) of dreams and events,- O Thou Creator of the heavens(1782) and the earth! Thou art my Protector in this world and in the Hereafter. Take Thou my soul (at death) as one submitting to Thy will (as a Muslim), and unite me with the righteous."(1783)

1781 Then he turns to Allah in prayer, and again his modesty is predominant. He held supreme power under the king, but he calls it "some power" or authority. His reading of events and dreams had saved millions of lives in the great Eygptian famine; yet he refers to it as "something of the interpretation of dreams and events". And he takes no credit to himself. "All this;" he says, "was Thy gift, O Allah! For such things can only come from the Creator of the heavens and the earth."

1782 Power in the doing of things as well as power in intelligent forecasts and plans--both must look to Allah: otherwise the deed and the plan would be futile.

1783 Joseph's prayer may be analysed thus: (1)I am nothing; all power and knowledge are Thine; (2) such things can only come from Thee, for Thou art the Creator of all; (3) none can protect me from danger and wrong, but only Thou; (4) Thy protection I need both in this world and the next; (5) may I till death remain constant to Thee; (6) may I yield up my soul to Thee in cheerful submission to Thy will; (7) in this moment of union with my family after many partings let me think of the final union with the great spiritual family of the righteous. How marvellously apt to the occasion! *(Cf.* 13:23).

102. Such is one of the stories of what happened unseen,(1784) which We reveal by inspiration unto thee; nor wast thou(1785) (present) with them then when they concerted their plans together in the process of weaving their plots.

1784 The story is finished. But is it a story? It is rather a recital of forces and motives, thoughts and feelings, complications and results, ordinarily not seen by men. However much they concert their plans and unite their forces, whatever dark plots they back with all their resources--the plan of Allah works irresistibly, and sweeps away all their machinations. The good win through in the end, but not always as they planned; the evil are foiled, and often their very plots help the good. What did the brothers desire in trying to get rid of Joseph, and what actually happened? How the Courtier's wife, encouraged by the corrupt women of her acquaintance, tried and failed to seduce Joseph and how Allah listened to his prayer and saved him from her vile designs? How wrong was it of the cupbearer to forget Joseph, and yet how his very forgetfulness kept Joseph safe and undisturbed in prison until the day came when he should tackle the great problems of King's kingdom? With every character in the story there are problems, and the whole is a beautifully balanced picture of the working of Allah's Providence in man's chequered destiny. (R).

1785 The Prophet was no actor in those scenes; yet by inspiration he was able to expound them in the Divine Light, as they had never been expounded before, whether in the Pentateuch or by any Seer before him. And allegorically they figured his own story--how his own brethren sought to betray and kill him, how by Allah's Providence he was not only saved but he won through. (R).

103. Yet no faith will the greater part of mankind have, however ardently thou dost desire it.(1786)

1786 In spite of such an exposition and such a convincing illustration, how few men really have true faith--such a faith as Jacob had in the old story, or Muhammad the Chosen One had, in the story which was actually unfolding itself on the world's stage when this Surah was revealed, shortly before the Hij rah? Al Mustafa's ardent wish and faith was to save his people and all mankind from the graceless condition of want of faith. But his efforts were flouted, and he had to leave his home and suffer all kinds of persecution; but, tike Joseph, and more than Joseph, he was marked out for great work, which he finally achieved.

104. And no reward dost thou ask of them for this: it is no less than a message for all creatures.(1787)

1787 The Divine Message was priceless; it was not for the Messenger's personal profit, nor did he ask of men any reward for bringing it for their benefit. It was for all creatures--literally, for all the worlds, as explained in 1:2. n. 20 (see also 34:47 and 36:21).

105. And how many Signs in the heavens and the earth do they pass by? Yet they turn (their faces) away from them!(1788)

1788 Not only can we learn through Scripture of the working of Allah's providence in human history and the history of individual souls, hut also His Signs are scattered literally throughout nature--throughout Creation--for all who have eyes to see. And yet man is so arrogant that he turns away his very eyes from them!

106. And most of them believe not in Allah without associating (other as partners) with Him!(1789)

1789 Even if people profess a nominal faith in Allah, they corrupt it by believing in other things as if they were Allah's partners, or had some share in the shaping of the world's destinies! In some circles, it is idolatry, the worship of stocks and stones. In others, it is Christolatry and Mariolatry, or the deification of heroes and men of renown. In others it is the powers of Nature or of Life, or of the human intellect personified in Science or Art or invention, and this is the more common form of modern idolatry. Others again worship mystery, or imaginary powers of good or even evil: greed and fear are mixed up with these forms of worship. Islam calls us to worship Allah, the One True God, and Him only. (R).

107. Do they then feel secure from the coming against them of the covering veil(1790) of the wrath of Allah,- or of the coming against them of the (final) Hour all of a sudden(1791) while they perceive not?

1790 *Ghashiyah* = covering veil, pall; used for the Judgement to come, which will be so dark and appalling as to hide up all other and petty things, and be the one great reality for the souls that were slaves to evil.

1791 The metaphor is changed, from intensity of darkness to suddenness of time. It will come before they are aware of it. Let them not feel any sense of safety in sin *(Cf.* 43:66).

108. Say thou: "This is my way: I do invite unto Allah,- on evidence clear as the seeing with one´s eyes,-(1792) I and whoever follows me. Glory to Allah. and never will I join gods with Allah."

1792 Islam holds fast to the one central fact in the spiritual world--the unity of Allah, and all Reality springing from Him and Him alone. There can be no one and nothing in competition with that one and only Reality. It is the essence of Truth. All other ideas or existences, including our perception of Self, are merely relative--mere projections from the wonderful faculties which He has given to us. This is not, to us, mere hypothesis. It is in our inmost experience. In the physical world, they say that seeing is believing. In our inner world this sense of Allah is as clear as sight in the physical world. Therefore, Al Mustafa and those who really follow him in the truest sense of the world, call all the world to see this Truth, feel this experience, follow this Way. They will never be distracted by metaphysical speculations, whose validity will always be doubtful, nor be deluded with phantoms which lead men astray.

109. Nor did We send before thee (as messengers) any but men,(1793) whom we did inspire,- (men) living in human habitations. Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them? But the home of the Hereafter(1794) is best, for those who do right. Will ye not then understand?

1793 I was man that allah sent as His Messengers to explain Him to man. He did not send angels or gods. Into His chosen men He breathed His inspirations, so that they could see truer than other men. But they were men living with men-in men's habitations in town or country; not reclues or cenobites, who had no personal experience of men's affairs and could not be teachers of men in the fullest sense. Their deeds tell their own tale.

1794 The righteous, the men of Allah, had, as in Joseph's history, some evidence of Allah's Providence in this very world with all its imperfections as reflecting our imperfections. But this world is of no real consequance of them. Their home is in the Hereafter Josepth's eartly home was in Canaan: but he attained his glory elsewhere; and his spiritual Home is in the great Society of the Righteous.(3:39).

110. (Respite will be granted) until, when the messengers give up hope (of their people) and (come to) think that they were treated as liars,(1795) there reaches them Our help, and those whom We will are delivered into safety. But never will be warded off our punishment from those who are in sin.

1795 *Zannu* (comes to think): I construe the nominative of this verb to be "the messengers" in agreement with the best authorities. *Kudhibu* is the usual reading, though *Kudhdhibu*, the alternative reading, also rests on good authority. I construe the meaning to be: that Allah gives plenty of rope to the wicked (as in Joseph's story) until His own Messengers feel almost that it will be hopeless to preach to them and come to consider themselves branded as liars by an unbelieving world; that the breaking-point is then reached; that Allah's help then comes swiftly to His men, and they are delivered from persecution and danger, while the wrath of Allah overtakes sinners, and nothing can then ward it off. This interpretation has good authority behind it, though there are differences of opinion.

111. There is, in their stories,(1796) instruction for men endued with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it,-(1797) a detailed exposition of all things, and a guide and a mercy to any such as believe.

1796 *Their stories, i.e.,* the stories of the Prophets or of the wicked; for the two threads interwine, as in Joseph's story.

1797 A story like that of Joseph is not a purely imaginary fable. The People of the Book have it in their sacred literature. It is confirmed here in its main outline, but here there is a detailed spiritual exposition that will be found nowhere in earlier literature. The exposition covers all sides of human life. If properly understood, it gives valuable lessons to guide our conduct—an instance of Allah's grace and mercy to people who will go to Him in faith and put their affairs in His hands.



13. Al Ra'd (The Thunder)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A.L.M.R.(1798) These are the signs (or verses)(1799) of the Book: that which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord is the Truth; but most men believe not.

1798 For Alif, Lam, Mim, see 2:1, n. 25. For Alif, Lam, Ra', see Introduction to S. 10. For abbreviated Letters generally see Appendix I. Here there seems to be a combination of the groups Alif, Lam, Mim and Alif, Lam, Ra'. We consider here not only the beginning (Alif), the middle (Lam), and the end (Mim), of man's spiritual history, but also the immediate future of the interior of our organisation, such as it appeared to our Ummah towards the close of the Makkan period. But in trying to determine their meaning, we must not be dogmatic. The befitting attitude is to say: Allah knows best. (R).

1799 *Cf.* 10:1, n. 1382.

2. Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars(1800) that ye can see; is firmly established on the throne (of Authority);(1801) He has subjected the sun and the moon (to his Law)! Each one runs (its course) for a term appointed. He doth regulate all affairs,(1802) explaining the signs in detail, that ye may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord.(1803)

1800 Should we construe the clause "that ye can see" to refer to "pillars" or "to the heavens"? Either is admissible, but I prefer the former. The heavens are supported on no pillars that we can see. What we see is the blue vault of heaven, but there are invisible forces or conditions created by Allah, which should impress us with His power and glory.

1801 *Cf.* 10:3, and n. 1386. We must not think that anything came into being by itself or carries out its functions by itself. Allah is the active Force through which everything has its life and being and through which everything is maintained and supported, even though fixed laws are established for its regulation and government. The "term appointed" limits the duration of their functioning: its ultimate return is to Allah, as its beginning proceeded from Allah (see also 35:13).

1802 *Cf.* 10:31 , n. 1425. Where the laws of nature are fixed, and everything runs according to its appointed course, the government and regulation behind it is still that of Allah. Where there is limited free will as in man, yet the ultimate source of man's faculties is Allah. Allah cares for His creatures. He does not, as in the idea of polytheistic Greece , sit apart on Olympus , careless of His creatures (see also 29:61).

1803 One manifestation of His caring for His creatures, even where a limited amount of free will is granted for their development, is that He is careful to explain His Signs both in nature and in express and detailed revelation through His Messengers, lest man should have any doubts whether he has to return ultimately to his Lord and account for all his actions during the "term appointed," when he was given some initiative by way of trial and preparation. If man attends carefully to the Signs, he should have no doubt whatever.

3. And it is He who spread out the earth, and set thereon mountains standing firm and (flowing) rivers: and fruit of every kind He made in pairs, two and two:(1804) He draweth the night as a veil(1805) o´er the Day. Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who consider!

1804 I think that this refers to sex in plants, and I see M.P. has translated accordingly. Plants like animals have their reproductive apparatus—male stamens and female pistils. In most cases the same flower combines both stamens and pistils, but in some cases these organs are specialised in separate flowers, and in some cases, even in separate trees. The date palm of Arabia and the Papaya of India, are instances of fruit trees which are unisexual *(Cf.* 20:53 and 31:10).

1805 *Cf.* 7:54 and n. 1032. The whole passage there may be compared with the whole passage here. Both their similarity and their variation show how closely reasoned each argument is, with expressions exactly appropriate to each occasion.

4. And in the earth are tracts (Diverse though) neighbouring, and gardens of vines and fields sown with corn, and palm trees - growing(1806) out of single roots or otherwise: watered with the same water, yet some of them We make more excellent than others to eat.(1807) Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who understand!

1806 Does "growing out of single roots or otherwise" qualify "palm trees" or "vines" and "corn" as well? The former construction is adopted by the classical Commentators: in which case the reference is to the fact either that two or more palm trees occasionally grow out of a single root, or that palm, trees grow sometimes as odd trees and sometimes in great thick clusters. If the latter construction is adopted, the reference would , be to the fact that date palm (and palms generally) and some other plants arise out of a single taproot, while the majority of trees arise out of a network of roots that spread out extensively. Here is adaptation to soil and water conditions—another Sign or wonder of Creation.

1807 The date palm, the crops of food-grains, and the grapevine are all fed by the same kind of water, yet how different the harvests which they yield! And that applies to all vegetation. The fruit or eatable produce may vary in shape, size, colour, flavour, etc., in endless variety.

5. If thou dost marvel (at their want of faith), strange is their saying: "When we are (actually) dust,(1808) shall we indeed then be in a creation renewed?" They are those who deny their Lord! They are those round whose necks will be yokes (of servitude):(1809) they will be Companions of the Fire, to dwell therein (for aye)!

1808 After seeing the Signs in nature and the Signs in revelation, it is indeed strange that people should deny their Creator. But if they admit the Signs of the Creator, Who works marvels before their very eyes everyday, why should they doubt that when they are reduced to dust, they can be raised up again? If one creation is possible, what difficulty can there be in accepting a renewed creation? It becomes then a question of obstinate and rebellious will, for which the punishment is described.

1809 *Aghlal:* yokes (of servitude): *Cf.* 7:157 and n. 1128. The punishment may be conceived of in two stages: immediately, yokes of servitude to superstition, falsehood, etc., as against the freedom in Faith; and finally, the Fire which burns the very soul (see also 32:10).

6. They ask thee to hasten on the evil in preference to the good:(1810) Yet have come to pass, before them, (many) exemplary punishments! But verily thy Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind for their wrong-doing, and verily thy Lord is (also) strict in punishment.

1810 *Cf.* 18:55 and 27:46). The Unbelievers by way of a taunt say: "If there is a punishment, let us see it come down now." The answer to it is threefold. (1) Why do you want to see the punishment rather than the mercy of Allah? Which is better? (2) Have you not heard in history of terrible punishments for evil? And have you not before your very eyes seen examples of wickedness brought to book? (3) Allah works not only injustice and punishment, but also in mercy and forgiveness, and mercy and forgiveness come first.

7. And the Unbelievers say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?"(1811) But thou art truly a warner, and to every people a guide.(1812)

1811 After all the Signs that have just been mentioned it is mere fractiousness to say, "Bring down a Sign." Al Mustafa brought Signs and credentials as other Prophets did, and like them, refused to satisfy mere idle curiosity.

1812 The last sentence of this verse has usually been interpreted to mean that the Prophet's function was merely to warn, and that guidance was sent by Allah to every nation through its Prophets. I think the following interpretation is equally possible: 'it is itself a Sign that Al Mustafa should warn and preach and produce the Qur'an, and the guidance which he brings is universal guidance, as from Allah.'

8. Allah doth know what every female (womb) doth bear,(1813) by how much the wombs fall short (of their time or number) or do exceed. Every single thing is before His sight, in (due) proportion.

1813 The female womb is just an example, a type, of extreme secrecy. Not even the female herself knows what is in the womb—whether it is a male young or a female young, whether it is one or more, whether it is to be born short of the standard time or to exceed the standard time. But the most hidden and apparently unknowable things are clear to Allah's knowledge: there is no mere chance: all things are regulated by Allah in just measure and proportion. The general proposition comes in the last sentence: "every single thing is before His sight, in (due) proportion."

9. He knoweth the unseen and that which is open: He is the Great, the Most High.(1814)

1814 A verse of matchless rhythm in Arabic.

10. It is the same (to Him) whether any of you conceal his speech or declare it openly; whether he lie hid by night or walk forth freely by day.(1815)

1815 Our most hidden thoughts and motives are known to Him at all times.

11. For each (such person)(1816) there are (angels) in succession, before and behind him: They guard him by command of Allah. Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves.(1817) But when (once) Allah willeth a people´s punishment, there can be no turning it back, nor will they find, besides Him, any to protect.

1816 See last verse. Every person, whether he conceals or reveals his thoughts, whether he skulks in darkness or goes about by day—all are under Allah's watch and ward. His grace encompasses everyone, and again and again protects him, if he will only take the protection, from harm and evil. If in his folly he thinks he can secretly take some pleasure or profit, he is wrong, for recording angels record all his thoughts and deeds.

1817 Allah is not intent on punishment. He created man virtuous and pure: He gave him intelligence and knowledge; He surrounded him with all sorts of instruments of His grace and mercy. If, in spite of all this, man distorts his own will and goes against Allah's Will, yet is Allah's forgiveness open to him if he will take it. It is only when he has made his own sight blind and changed his own nature or soul away from the beautiful mould in which Allah formed it, that Allah's Wrath will descend on him and the favourable position in which Allah placed him will be changed. When once the punishment comes, there is no turning it back.

None of the things which he relied upon—other than Allah—can possibly protect him.

12. It is He Who doth show you the lightning, by way both of fear and of hope:(1818) It is He Who doth raise up the clouds, heavy with (fertilising) rain!

1818 Here then is the climax to the answer of the sarcastic challenge of the Unbelievers for punishment, in language of great sublimity. Why look to evil rather than to good?— to punishment rather than to mercy?—to the fear in the force and fire of the lightning rather than to the hope of good and abundant crops in the rain which will come behind the lightning clouds? *(Cf.* 30:24)

13. Nay, thunder repeateth His praises, (1819)and so do the angels, with awe:(1820) He flingeth the loud-voiced thunder-bolts, and therewith He striketh whomsoever He will..yet these (are the men) who (dare to) dispute about Allah, with the strength of His power (supreme)!(1821)

1819 Nay, thunder itself, which may frighten you, is but a tame and beneficent force before Him, declaring His praises, like the rest of creation. Thunder thus aptly gives the name of this Surah of contrasts, where what we may think terrible is shown to be really a submissive instrument of good in Allah's hands.

1820 And the angels, whom we think to be beautiful creatures of power and glory nearest to Allah, yet feel reverence and awe even as they praise His Holy Name.

1821 Who is puny man, to call Allah in question? *Cf.* some variations on this theme in the Book of Job, *e.g.,* chapters 38 to 41.

14. For Him (alone) is prayer in Truth:(1822) any others that they call upon besides Him hear them no more than if they were to stretch forth their hands for water to reach their mouths but it reaches them not: for the prayer of those without Faith is nothing but (futile) wandering (in the mind).(1823)

1822 *Haqq=* truth; right; what is due, befitting, proper. All these meanings are to be understood here. If we worship anything other than Allah (whether it is idols, stars, powers of nature, spirits, or deified men, or Self, or Power, or Wealth, Science or Art, Talent or Intellect), our worship is both foolish and futile.

1823 Without Faith, it is obvious that prayer or worship has no meaning whatever. It is but an aberration of the mind. But there is a deeper meaning. You may have false faith, as in superstitions or in worshipping things other than Allah, as explained in the last note. In that case, too, you are pursuing mere phantoms of the mind. When you come to examine it, it is mere imbecility or futility. Worship and prayer are justified only to Allah, the One True God *(Cf.* 40:50). (R).

15. Whatever beings(1824) there are in the heavens and the earth do prostrate themselves to Allah(1825) (Acknowledging subjection),- with good-will or in spite of themselves:(1826) so do their shadows:(1827) in the morning and evenings.

1824 Notice that the original of what I have translated "whatever being" is the personal pronoun *man,* not *ma.* This then refers to beings with a personality, *e.g.,* angels, spirits, human beings, and possibly other things of objective (not necessarily material) existence, as contrasted with their Shadows or Simulacre or Appearances, or Phantasms, mentioned at the end of the verse. Both these Beings and their Shadows are subject to the Will of Allah. See notes 1825 and 1827.

1825 "Prostrate themselves": the posture means that they recognise their subjection to Allah's Will and Law, whether they wish it or not.

1826 "In spite of themselves": Satan and the Spirits of Evil. They would like to get away from the control of the All-Good Allah, but they cannot, and they have to acknowledge His supremacy and lordship over them.

1827 Even the Shadows-creations of the Imagination, or projections from other things and dependent on the other things for their existence, as shadows or to substance-even such shadows are subject to Allah's Laws and Will, and cannot arise or have any effect on our minds except by His permission. The Shadows are longest and therefore most prominent when the sun is level, and tend to disappear as the sun approaches the zenith. But even when they are longest and most prominent, they are still subject to Allah's Will and Law. (R).

16. Say: "Who is the Lord and Sustainer(1828) of the heavens and the earth?" Say: "(It is) Allah." Say: "Do ye then take (for worship) protectors other than Him, such as have no power either for good or for harm to themselves?"(1829) Say: "Are the blind equal with those who see? Or the depths of darkness equal with light?" Or do they assign to Allah(1830) partners who have created (anything) as He has created, so that the creation seemed to them similar? Say: "(Allah) is the Creator of all things: He is the One, the Supreme and Irresistible."

1828 The meaning of *Rabb* is explained in n. 20, to 1:2.

1829 *Cf.* 5:76.

1830 This verse may be analysed into six parts, each two parts going together like question and answer. Each except the fifth part is introduced by the word "Say", which is equivalent in old Arabic to inverted commas. The fifth part, "or do they assign . . . similar?" is not introduced by "Say", because it is in the indirect form.

(1) Who is the Lord and Sustainer of the Worlds? It is Allah. (2) And yet you worship other gods? No, no one can be equal to Him, any more than darkness is equal to light. (3) Your other gods have created nothing by which you can be misled? No indeed; He is the only Creator, the One and Supreme.

17. He sends down water(1831) from the skies, and the channels flow, each according to its measure: But the torrent bears away to foam that mounts up to the surface. Even so, from that (ore) which they heat(1832) in the fire, to make ornaments or utensils therewith, there is a scum likewise. Thus doth Allah (by parables) show forth Truth and Vanity. For the scum disappears like forth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth. Thus doth Allah set forth parables.

1831 This verse is full of parables. (1) It is Allah Who sends rain and sends it to all. See how it flows in different channels according to their capacities. Some are sluggish; some have a swift current. Some form great rivers and irrigate wide tracts of country; some are clear crystal streams, perhaps in hilly tracts, with beds of clean pebbles which you can see through the water. Some produce delicious edible fish: and some are infested by crocodiles or injurious monsters. And there are degrees, and degrees among brooks, streams, lakes, rivers, and seas. So with the rain of Allah's mercy and the knowledge and wisdom and guidance which He sends. All can receive it. Different ones will respond according to their capacities. (2) In the physical world, water is pure and beneficial. But froth and scum will gather according to local conditions. As the floods will carry off the scum and purify the water, so will the flood of Allah's spiritual mercy carry away our spiritual scum and purify the water. (3) The froth may make a greater show on the surface, but it will not last. So will there be frothy knowledge which will disappear, but Allah's Truth will endure.

1832 In continuation of the last note, the fourth parable is that of metal ores: (4) the ore is full of baser admixture, but the fire will separate the gold from the dross for ornaments, or (5) some metal of household utility, with which you make everyday utensils, which the fire will separate from admixtures which you do not want. So the fire of Allah's test, either by adversity or by affluence, will search out the true metal in us and reject the dross. It will show us what is valuable or what is useful, all sorts of scum and vanity which we collect and miscall knowledge.

18. For those who respond to their Lord, are (all) good things. But those who respond not to Him,- Even if they had all that is in the heavens and on earth, and as much more, (in vain) would they offer it(1833) for ransom. For them will the reckoning be terrible: their abode will be Hell,- what a bed of misery!

1833 *Cf.* 3:91 and 10:54 .

19. Is then one who doth know that that which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord is the Truth, like one who is blind?(1834) It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition;-

1834 In this section the contrast between Faith and Righteousness on the one hand and Infidelity and Evil on the other is set out. The righteous man is known as one who (1) receives admonition; (2) is true to his covenants; (3) follows the universal Religion of Faith and Practice joined together; (4) is patient and persevering in seeking Allah; and in practical matters he is known to be; (5) regular in prayer; (6) generous in true charity, whether open or secret; and(7) not revengeful, but anxious to turn off evil with good, thus breaking the chain of evil which tends to perpetuate itself.

20. Those who fulfil the covenant of Allah and fail not in their plighted word;

21. Those who join together those things which Allah hath commanded to be joined,(1835) hold their Lord in awe, and fear the terrible reckoning;

1835 That is, join faith with practice, love of Allah with love of man, and respect for all Prophets alike, *i.e.,* follow the universal Religion, and not odd bits of it.

22. Those who patiently persevere, seeking the countenance of their Lord; Establish regular prayers; spend, out of (the gifts) We have bestowed for their sustenance, secretly and openly; and turn off Evil with good: for such there is the final attainment of the (Eternal) Home,-(1836)

1836 Their journey in this life was at best a sojourn. The final Bliss is their eternal Home, which is further prefigured in the two following verses.

23. Gardens of perpetual bliss: they shall enter there, as well as the righteous among their fathers, their spouses, and their offspring:(1837) and angels shall enter unto them from every gate (with the salutation):

1837 The relationships of this life are temporal, but love in righteousness is eternal. In the eternal Gardens of Bliss the righteous will be reunited with all those near and dear ones whom they loved, provided only that they were righteous also; for in eternity nothing else counts. Blood-relationships and marriage relationships create certain physical bonds in this life, which may lead so much good, and possibly also to evil. All that is physical or evil will go. But the good will come forth with a new meaning in the final Reckoning. Thus ancestors and descendants, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, (for *dhurriyyat* includes them), whose love was pure and sanctified, will find new bliss in the perfecting of their love and will see a new and mystic meaning in the old and ephemeral bonds. Can we wonder at Jacob's reunion with Joseph, or that of Moses with Aaron, or of Muhammad Al Mustafa with the Lady Khadijah? In fact all the Righteous will be reunited in the Hereafter (12:101).

24. "Peace unto you for that ye persevered in patience! Now how excellent is the final home!"

25. But those who break the Covenant of Allah, after having plighted their word thereto, and cut asunder those things(1838) which Allah has commanded to be joined, and work mischief in the land;- on them is the curse; for them is the terrible Home!(1839)

1838 This is the opposite of the things explained in 13:21 above, n. 1835.

1839 This is in contrast to the state of the blessed, described in 13:22-24 above. The Curse is the opposite of the Bliss, and the Terrible Home is the opposite of the Eternal Home, the Gardens of perpetual bliss.

26. Allah doth enlarge, or grant by (strict) measure, the Sustenance(1840) (which He giveth) to whomso He pleaseth. (The wordly) rejoice in the life of this world:

But the life of this world is but little comfort in the Hereafter.(1841)

1840 Allah, the Sustainer and Cherisher of all His creatures, gives sustenance to all—the sustenance including all means for their physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual growth and development according to their needs and capacities. To some He grants it in abundance; to others He gives it in strict measure. No one can question Him, for His Will is supreme, and it is the measure of all good *(Cf.* 29:61-62).

1841 *Cf.* 9:38. The meaning here may also be: This present life is just a furniture, a convenience, a stepping stone, a probation, for the life to come. In itself it is less important than the Hereafter.

27. The Unbelievers say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?"(1842) Say: "Truly Allah leaveth, to stray, whom He will; But He guideth to Himself those who turn to Him in penitence,-

1842 The question is repeated from 13:7 above: for the line of reasoning there suggested in answer is now completed, and another line of reasoning is now taken up. Allah provides every guidance for those who turn to Him in penitence, but He will leave those to wander astray who deliberately close their eyes and their hearts to His grace and the comfort that comes from remembering Him and celebrating His praises.

28. "Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah. for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.(1843)

1843 The Sign or Miracle is not something external: it is something internal, something in your mind, heart, and soul. It depends on your inner spiritual experience. If you turn to Allah, that light, that experience, will come. If you do not, Allah will not force you.

29. "For those who believe and work righteousness, is (every) blessedness,(1844) and a beautiful place of (final) return."

1844 "Blessedness": *Tuba:* an internal state of satisfaction, an inward joy which is difficult to describe in words, but which reflects itself in the life of the good man, through good and ill fortune, through good report and evil. And then, there is always the final goal to which his eyes are turned, the beautiful Home of rest in the Hereafter, after this life's struggles are over. That goal is Allah Himself.

30. Thus have we sent thee amongst a People before whom (long since) have (other) Peoples (gone and) passed away;(1845) in order that thou mightest rehearse unto them what We send down unto thee by inspiration; yet do they reject (Him), the Most Gracious! Say: "He is my Lord! There is no god but He! On Him is my trust, and to Him do I turn!"(1846)

1845 Our Prophet came later in time than other Prophets, to complete their Message and universalise Religion. And certainly it is after his age that the process of the unification of the world began. That process is not complete yet, but is proceeding apace.

1846 Faith tells us that no amount of opposition from Unbelievers can ever stop Allah's Plan.

31. If there were a Qur´an with which mountains were moved, or the earth were cloven asunder, or the dead were made to speak, (this would be the one!) But, truly, the command is with Allah in all things!(1847) Do not the Believers know, that, had Allah (so) willed, He could have guided all mankind (to the right)? But the Unbelievers,- never will disaster cease to seize them for their (ill) deeds, or to settle close to their homes, until the promise of Allah come to pass, for, verily, Allah will not fail in His promise.(1848)

1847 Everything is possible and in Allah's power. His Plan is beneficent and all-embracing. But it is not for His creatures to dictate to Him, or demand what He should do, or how He should do it. The Command is with Allah in all things. The Believers know His Omnipotence, and they also know that He will order His world for the best.

1848 Let not the Unbelievers think that if they seem to prosper for a time, that is the end of the matter. They are warned about three things. (1) Their ill deeds must carry evil consequences for them all the time, though they may not perceive them for a certain time. (2) Their homes, their places of resort, the circles in which they move, will also be haunted by their ill deeds and their consequences. For evil makes a complex of its environment. The walls of Jericho , when they fall, must bring down all Jericho in its ruins. (3) The ultimate Disaster, the Final Reckoning, must come, for Allah never fails in His promise. True values must eventually be restored: the good to the good, and the evil to the evil. The Commentators draw illustrations from the life of the Messenger, his exile from Makkah, and his restoration. A similar miracle works in all history. But the Command is with Allah.

32. Mocked were (many) Messengers(1849) before thee: but I granted respite to the unbelievers, and finally I punished them: Then how (terrible) was my requital!(1850)

1849 *Cf.* 6:10 and 36:30.

1850 The punishment was in many cases deferred. But when it did come, how terrible and exemplary it was?

33. Is then He who standeth over every soul (and knoweth) all that it doth, (like any others)? And yet they ascribe partners to Allah. Say: "But name them!(1851) is it that ye will inform Him of something he knoweth not on earth, or is it (just) a show of words?" Nay! to those who believe not, their pretence(1852) seems pleasing, but they are kept back (thereby) from the path. And those whom Allah leaves to stray, no one can guide.

1851 *Cf.* 12:40, You have but to name your false gods, and you will see that they are nothing but names. There is no reality behind them, whereas Allah is the One great Reality. He penetrates everything through and through and knows all things. Do you dare to tell Him of something on earth that He does not know? Or is it just a trick or a show of words?

1852 All pretences and fancies seem attractive to their inventors, but alas! they are a great obstruction to the Path of Religion and Truth. However, if by their contumacy, they have cut themselves off from Allah's grace, who can guide them or reclaim them from their errors?

34. For them is a penalty in the life of this world,(1853) but harder, truly, is the penalty of the Hereafter: and defender have they none against Allah.

1853 The consequences of sin may be felt in this life itself, but they are nothing compared to the final penalties in the life to come.

35. The parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised!- beneath it flow rivers: perpetual is the enjoyment thereof(1854) and the shade therein:(1855) such is the end of the Righteous; and the end of Unbelievers in the Fire.(1856)

1854 For the comprehensive meaning of the root *akala* (literally 'to eat'), see 5:66, n, 776. In its derived meaning, it means fruit and enjoyment of all kinds, spiritual as well as other. The joys of heaven are not like the joys of the earth, which fade away or cloy. The joys of heaven are pure, lasting, and without any of the drawbacks which we associate with the joys of the sense.

1855 *Zill:* literally shade, hence, shelter, protection, security. All these meanings are implied. Shade is one of the delights of a garden. *Cf.* 4:57, and n. 579.

1856 In this, as no other place, the Fire is contrasted with the Garden, as misery is contrasted with bliss. We can also imagine other incidents in contrast with those of the Garden; *e.g.,* with the Fire will be drought, aridity, thirst, instead of beautiful rivers; pain and suffering, instead of perpetual delight; no protection against the fierceness of the heat, as contrasted with the cool shades ever deepening as you proceed in the Garden.

36. Those to whom We have given the Book(1857) rejoice at what hath been revealed unto thee: but there are among the clans(1858) those who reject a part thereof. Say: "I am commanded to worship Allah,

and not to join partners with Him. Unto Him do I call, and unto Him is my return."

1857 *The Book:* in a general sense, Revelation. "Those to whom the Book hath been given" are both (1) the People of the Book of previous revelations, who study the new Revelation in Arabic without prejudice and find in it confirmation of what their ancestors had received; and (2) the Muslims who receive the Qur'an with such spiritual joy.

1858 *Ahzab* (plural of *hizb* = parties, sects, troops, clans. The reference may be to the clans mentioned in 33:20 and 22 (that whole Surah is called *Ahzab).* But we can understand it in a perfectly general sense, among all the sections of the people there are persons who would receive a portion of Allah's truth but reject whatever does not suit them or fall in with their selfish aims or vain desires. The proper answer to them is: surely, Allah's command is universal-to worship and serve Him and refuse to bend the knee to any other; the man of God finds his staff and support in it; but he must invite all to share in its blessings; it came from Allah, and to Allah shall we all return.

37. Thus have We revealed it to be a judgment of authority(1859) in Arabic. Wert thou to follow their (vain) desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither protector nor defender(1860) against Allah.

1859 The Qur'an is in Arabic; therefore the Arabs, among whom it was promulgated, could have no difficulty in understanding its precepts and using it in the judging of right and wrong in all their affairs. But it is also universal; therefore no one should give preference to his own vain fancies against this authoritative declaration.

1860 *Cf.* 2:120. The variation is in the single word *"Waq* here in place *of "Nasir"* in 2:120. In each case the apt word is chosen not only for the rhythm in its own passage but for the general meaning in the argument.

38. We did send messengers before thee, and appointed for them wives and children:(1861) and it was never the part of a messenger to bring a sign except as Allah permitted(1862) (or commanded). For each period is a Book (revealed).(1863)

1861 All the Prophets of whom we have any detailed knowledge, except one, had wives and children. The exception is Jesus, the son of Mary. But his life was incomplete: his ministry barely lasted three years; his mission was limited; and he was not called upon to deal with the many-sided problems that arise in a highly organised society or State. We pay equal respect to him, because he was Allah's Messenger; but that is not to say that his Message covers the same universal ground as that of al Mustafa. There is no reproach foranormal human being if he lives a normal human life; there is glory if he beautifies it and sets a nobler example of virtue than other men, as did al Mustafa.

1862 No Prophet performed any miracle or showed forth any "Signs," except as Allah willed. Allah's will *(Mash'ah)* is an All-Wise, universal Plan, which is not formed for the benefit of one tribe or *millah* or of one age or country (see also next verse). The greatest Miracle in history was and is the Qur'an. We can apprehend its beauty and grandeur today as much as did the people of al Mustafa's day-even more, as our collective knowledge of nature and of Allah's creation has increased.

1863 *Kitab:* I have translated "a Book (revealed)"; but it can also mean "a Law decreed" or "a Decree established." Ultimately the meaning is the same; for each age, according to Allah's wisdom, His Message is renewed *(Cf.* 34:4).

39. Allah doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth: with Him is the Mother of the Book.(1864)

1864 *Umm al Kitab'.* Mother of the Book: the original foundation of all revelation; the essence of Allah's Will and Law. *(Cf.* 3:7, n. 347, and 43:4).

40. Whether We shall show thee (within thy life-time) part of what we promised them or take to ourselves thy soul (before it is all accomplished),- thy duty is to make (the Message) reach them: it is our part to call them to account.

41. See they not that We gradually reduce the land (in their control) from its outlying borders?(1865) (Where) Allah commands, there is none to put back His Command: and He is swift in calling to account.

1865 In the Prophet's ministry at Makkah, the most stiff-necked opposition came from the sear and centre of power in Makkah. The humbler people—the fringe of Makkan society—came in readily, as also did some tribes round about Makkah. After the Hijrah there was a hard struggle between Makkah and Madinah, and at last the bloodless conquest of Makkah in 8 A. H. made the pagan structure finally collapse, though it had already been sapped to its foundations. So, generally, Truth finds easiest entrance through the humble and lowly, and not in the beginning at the headquarters of power, but in the fulness of time it makes its way everywhere with irresistible force.

42. Those before them did (also) devise plots; but in all things the master- planning is Allah's.(1866) He knoweth the doings of every soul: and soon will the Unbelievers know who gets home in the end.

1866 *Cf.* 3:54. and n. 393.

43. The Unbelievers say: "No messenger(1867) art thou." Say: "Enough for a witness between me and you is Allah, and such as have knowledge of the Book."(1868)

1867 The enemies of Islam have to acknowledge that Al Mustafa was a great and noble character, but they deny his Prophethood. He could point to his credentials from Allah in the work which he achieved, and the Qur'an which he brought.

1868 That is, those who have knowledge of revelation generally will recognise Allah's revelation in the Holy Qur'an. An alternative reading is *"min 'indihi",* which is written the same in Arabic, with only three vowel points different. If we adopt that, the last clause will be: "and from Him is (all) knowledge of the Book": i.e., 'as all knowledge of the Book comes from Allah, the Qur'an also bears witness to me.'

14. Ibrahim (Abraham)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A. L. R.(1869) A Book which We have revealed unto thee, in order that thou mightest lead mankind out of the depths of darkness into light - by the leave(1870) of their Lord - to the Way of (Him) the Exalted in power, worthy of all praise!-(1871)

1869 For those mystic Letters see Introduction to S. 10.

1870 It is insisted that every Prophet speaks not from himself but from Allah. His leading into the light is but by the Grace and Mercy of Allah, not by any power of his own, or by any merit of those who hear him.

1871 In this and the next verse where the sentence is completed, three qualities of Allah are mentioned, *viz., (1)* His exalted position above all Creation; (2) His goodness, which entitles Him, and Him alone, to Praise; and (3) His Power in all heaven and earth. Thus He stands in no need of man's worship; His goodness is all for the good of man (and His creatures); and His control over His creatures is complete; so He can carry out His Will and Plan.

2. Of Allah, to Whom do belong all things in the heavens and on earth! But alas for the Unbelievers(1872) for a terrible penalty (their Unfaith will bring them)!-

1872 See the last note. That being the case, in what a sad plight are those who reject the Faith and Grace offered to them, and draw down on themselves all the terrible consequence of that, rejection — the Wrath to come!

3. Those who love the life(1873) of this world more than the Hereafter, who hinder (men) from the Path of Allah and seek therein something crooked: they are astray by a long distance.

1873 The Unbelievers are here characterised in three ways: (1) they love this ephemeral life and its vanities more than the true Life which goes into the Hereafter; (2) they not only harm themselves but mislead others; (3) their own crooked minds search for something crooked in Allah's straight Path *(Cf.* 7:45). But in doing so, they go farther and farther from the Truth.

4. We sent not a messenger except (to teach) in the language(1874) of his (own) people, in order to make (things) clear to them. Now Allah leaves straying those whom He pleases:(1875) and guides whom He pleases: and He is Exalted in power, full of Wisdom.

1874 If the object of a Message is to make things clear, it must be delivered in the language current among the people to whom the Messenger is sent. Through them it can reach all mankind. There is even a wider meaning for "language". It is not merely a question of alphabets, letters, or words. Each age or people-or world in a psychological sense -casts its thoughts in a certain mould or form. Allah's Message - being universal -can be expressed in all moulds and forms, and is equally valid and necessary for all grades of humanity, and must therefore be explained to each according to his or her capacity or receptivity. In this respect the Qur'an is marvellous. It is for the simplest as well as the most advanced.

1875 *"Whom He pleases":* the usual expression for *Mashi'ah,* the universal Will and Plan, which is All-Wise and on the highest plane of goodness and righteousness. *(Cf.* 16:93).

5. We sent Moses with Our signs (and the command). "Bring out thy people from the depths of darkness into light, and teach them to remember the Days of Allah."(1876) Verily in this there are Signs for such as are firmly patient and constant,- grateful and appreciative.(1877)

1876 *"The Days of Allah":* the days when Allah's mercy was specially shown to them. Every day and every hour and minute, Allah's Grace flows to us abundantly, but there are special events in personal or national history which may be commemorated as Red-letter Days. Those to the Israelites were set out in great detail in 2:30-61 and in other places.

1877 *Sabbaris* the intensive form, and includes all the ideas implied in *Sabr* (2:45 and n. 61 and 2:153 n. 157) in an intensive degree. *Shakur a nd Shakir* have in them the idea of appreciation, recognition, gratitude as shown in deeds of goodness and righteousness. Both terms are applied to Allah as well as to men. A slight distinction in shades of meaning may be noted. *Shakur* implies that the appreciation is even for the smallest favours and response on the other side: it is mental attitude independent of specific facts. *Shakir* implies bigger and more specific things. *(Cf.* 35:30).

6. Remember! Moses said to his people: "Call to mind the favour of Allah to you when He delivered you(1878) from the people of Pharaoh: they set you hard tasks and punishments, slaughtered your sons, and let your women-folk live: therein was a tremendous trial from your Lord."

1878 *Cf.* 2:49. The reference back to Israel and Moses serves a double purpose-as an appeal to the People of the Book, and as a reminder to Quraysh of the favour now conferred on them by the coming among them of a greater Prophet than Moses.

7. And remember! your Lord caused to be declared (publicly): "If ye are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you; But if ye show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed."

8. And Moses said: "If ye show ingratitude,(1880) ye and all on earth together, yet is Allah free of all wants,(1881) worthy of all praise.

1880 Ingratitude not only in feeling or words, but in disobedience, and willful rejection and rebellion. If the whole of you band together against Allah, you do not detract from Allah's power one atom, because Allah does not depend upon you for anything, and His goodness and righteousness and praise worthiness cannot be called into question by your contumacy.

1881 *Cf.* 22:64, 29:6, 35:15, and 47:38.

9. Has not the story reached you, (O people!), of those who (went) before you? - of the people of Noah, and ´Ad, and Thamud? - And of those who (came) after them? None knows them(1882) but Allah. To them came messengers with Clear (Signs); but they put their hands(1883) up to their mouths, and said: "We do deny (the mission) on which ye have been sent, and we are really in suspicious (disquieting) doubt(1884) as to that to which ye invite us."

1882 Even the names of all the Prophets are not known to men, much less the details of their story. If some "news" of them (for the word translated "story" may also be translated "news") reaches us, it is to give us spiritual instruction for our own lives.

1883 That is, either that the unbelievers metaphorically put their hands up to the mouths of the Prophets to try to prevent them from proclaiming their Message, or that the unbelievers, put up their fingers to their own mouths, as much as to say "Don't listen to them," or bit their own fingers in token of incontinent rage. Whatever construction we adopt, the meaning is that they were intolerant of their prophets even as Quraysh were intolerant of Al Mustafa and did all they could to suppress Allah's Truth.

1884 *Cf.* 11:62. The distinction between *Skakk* and *rayb* may be noted. *Shakk* is intellectual doubt, a doubt as to fact: is it so, or is it not? *Rayb* is something more than intellectual doubt; a suspicion that there is fraud or deception; something that upsets your moral belief, and causes a disquiet in your soul- In 52:30, it is used as equivalent to "calamity" or "disaster", some punishment or evil. Both kinds of doubts and suspicions are hinted at against Prophets of Allah (see also 34:54).

10. Their messengers said: "Is there a doubt about Allah, The Creator of the heavens and the earth? It is He(1885) Who invites you, in order that He may forgive you your sins and give you respite for a term appointed!" They said: "Ah! ye are no more than human, like ourselves! Ye wish to turn us away from the (gods) our fathers used to worship: then bring us some clear authority."(1886)

1885 The Prophets (generally) clear both kinds of doubt. 'You cannot doubt the existence of Allah! Behold His works! We are not speaking for ourselves or deceiving you. We speak according to the Message of inspiration from Allah." Notice that the doubters had said to the Prophets: "Ye invite us." The Prophets say: "It is Allah Who invites you, and He does it to save you by His grace, and give you plenty of time (but not indefinite time) for penitence and amendment."

1886 Infidelity is illogical and argues in a circle. If the Prophet speaks of Allah, the Unbeliever says, 'You are only a man!" "But I speak from Allah!" "Oh well! Our ancestral ways of worship are good enough for us!" "What if they are wrong?" "What authority have you for saying so?" "The highest authority, that from Allah!" And so we come back full circle! Then the wicked rely on violence, but it recoils on them, and they perish.

11. Their messengers said to them: "True, we are human like yourselves, but Allah doth grant His grace to such of his servants as He pleases. It is not for us to bring you an authority except as Allah permits. And on Allah let all men of faith put their trust.

12. "No reason have we why we should not put our trust on Allah. Indeed He Has guided us to the Ways we (follow). We shall certainly bear with patience all the hurt you may cause us. For those who put their trust should put their trust on Allah."

13. And the Unbelievers said to their messengers: "Be sure we shall drive you out of our land, or ye shall return to our religion."(1887) But their Lord inspired (this Message) to them: "Verily We shall cause the wrong-doers to perish!

1887 The arguments in a circle were explained in the last note. But Infidelity looks upon argument merely as an amusement. Its chief weapon is physical force. As its only belief is in materialism, it thinks that threats of force will put down the righteous. It offers the choice between exile and violence against conformity to its own standards of evil, which it thinks to be good. But Faith is not to be cowed down by Force. Its source of strength is Allah, and it receives the assurance that violence will perish ultimately by violence, and that Faith and Goodness must stand and be established. In fact the good must inherit the earth and the evil ones be blotted out.

14. "And verily We shall cause you to abide in the land, and succeed them. This for such as fear(1888) the Time when they shall stand before My tribunal,- such as fear the punishment denounced."

1888 "Fear" means here "have present before their minds something which should cause fear, so that they should shape their conduct in order to avoid the ill consequences of wickedness."

15. But they sought victory and decision(1889) (there and then), and frustration was the lot of every powerful obstinate transgressor.(1890)

1889 *Cf.* 8:19. 1 have assumed that "they" in this verse is the same as "them" in the preceding verse, i.e., the ungodly. Hoping for victory, they forced a decision, and they got it-against themselves. Or they challenged a punishment, and it came in good time. Some Commentators construe "they" here to mean "the Prophets"; in that case the verse would mean: "The Prophets prayed for a victory and decision, and the ungodly were frustrated in their efforts to suppress the Truth."

1890 *Cf.* 11:59.

16. In front of such a one is Hell, and he is given, for drink, boiling fetid water.

17. In gulps will he sip it, but never will he be near swallowing it down his throat: death will come to him from every quarter, yet will he not die: and in front of him will be a chastisement unrelenting.(1891)

1891 A graphic and deterrent picture, from the preaching of the earlier Prophets, of unrelieved horror of the torments of Hell. The door of escape by annihilation is also closed to them (*Cf.* 2:126 and 31:24).

18. The parable of those who reject their Lord is that their works are as ashes,(1892) on which the wind blows furiously on a tempestuous day: No power have they over aught that they have earned: that is the straying far, far (from the goal).

1892 Note the fullness of the parable. The works of the ungoldy are in themselves light and unsubstantial like ashes: they are the useless rubbish that remains out of the faculties and opportunities which they have misused by burning them up. Further, the ashes are blown about hither and thither by the wind: the ungodly have no compass, direction, or purpose that can stand. The wind, too, which blows on them is no ordinary wind, nor the day on which they seek to enjoy the fruits of their labours an ordinary tranquil day: a furious gale is blowing, for such is the Wrath of Allah. They have neither internal peace nor external gain. In the scattering of the ashes they lose control even of such things as they might have earned but for their misdeeds. Their whole nature is contaminated. All their wishes go astray. They are carried so far, far away from what was on their minds. What did they aim at, and what did they achieve?

19. Seest thou not that Allah created the heavens and the earth in Truth?(1893) If He so will, He can remove you and put (in your place) a new creation?

1893 *Haqq:* Truth. Right. Righteousness. True proportions. Reality. Allah's creation is not to be trifled with. It is built on righteousness, and those who do not obey its laws must give place to others who do. This warning is repeated again and again in history and in revelation. *Cf.* 6:73.

20. Nor is that for Allah any great matter.(1894)

1894 *'Aziz:* great, mighty, excellent, powerful, rare, precious.

21. They will all be marshalled before Allah together: then will the weak say to those(1895) who were arrogant, "For us, we but followed you; can ye then avail us to all against the wrath of Allah." They will reply, "If we had received the Guidance(1896) of Allah, we should have given it to you: to us it makes no difference (now) whether we rage, or bear (these torments) with patience: for ourselves there is no way of escape."

1895 When the time for judgement comes, there are two kinds of disillusionment waiting for the ungodly. (1) Those who were misled and failed to see that each soul bears its own personal responsibility (2:134) and cannot shift it on to others, will turn to those who misled them, in the hope that they might intercede for them or do something to help them. They receive a plain answer as in the latter part of this verse. (2) Those who relied on Satan, the Power of Evil. His answer (in 14:22 below) is frank, cynical and brutal.

1896 Those whose power or specious intelligence or influence misled them-such as false priests or leaders-will find themselves in a perilous state. How can they help others? They themselves failed to profit from Allah's guidance, and they can with some justice retort that they put them in the wrong path as they followed it themselves!

22. And Satan will say when the matter is decided:(1897) "It was Allah Who gave you a promise of Truth: I too promised, but I failed in my promise to you. I had no authority over you except to call you but ye listened to me: then reproach not me, but reproach your own souls. I cannot listen to your cries, nor can ye listen to mine. I reject(1898) your former act in associating me with Allah. For wrong-doers there must be a grievous penalty."

1897 After the Judgement, Evil declares itself in its true colours. Frankly it says: 'I deceived you. The promise of Allah was true, but you believed me rather than

Allah. I had no power to force you. I had but to call you, and you came running after me. You must blame yourselves. Did you think I was equal with Allah? I know too well that I was not and never could be. If you did wrong, you must suffer the Penalty.'

1898 See the last note. An alternative interpretation of this sentence may be: "I had already beforehand rebelled against Allah with Whom ye associated me."

23. But those who believe and work righteousness will be admitted to gardens beneath which rivers flow,- to dwell therein for aye with the leave of their Lord. Their greeting therein will be: "Peace!"(1899)

1899 How this contrasts with the misery and mutual self-recrimination of the ungodly!

24. Seest thou not how Allah sets forth a parable? - A goodly word(1900) like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens,- of its Lord. So Allah sets forth parables for men, in order that they may receive admonition.

1900 "Goodly word" is usually interpreted as the Divine Word, the Divine Message, the True Religion. It may also be interpreted in a more general sense as a word of truth, a word of goodness or kindness, which follows from a true appreciation of Religion. For Religion includes our duty to Allah and our duty to man. The "evil word" is opposite to this: false religion, blasphemy, false speech, or preaching or teaching unkindness and wrongdoing. (R).

25. It brings forth its fruit(1901) at all times, by the leave of its Lord. So Allah sets forth parables for men, in order that they may receive admonition.

1901 The goodly tree is known for: (1) its beauty: it gives pleasure to all who see it: (2) its stability; it remains firm and unshaken in storms, because its roots are firmly fixed in the earth; (3) its wide compass; its branches reach high, and it catches all the sunshine from heaven, and gives shade to countless birds in its branches and men and animals beneath it, and (4) its abundant fruit, which it yields at all times. So is the Good Word. It is as beautiful as it is true. It abides in all changes and chances of this life, and even beyond (see verse 27 below): it is never shaken by sorrow or what seems to us calamity; its roots are deep down in the bedrock facts of life. Its reach is universal, above, around, below: it is illuminated by the divine light from heaven, and its consolation reaches countless beings of all grades of life. Its fruit-the enjoyment of its blessings-is not confined to one season or one set of circumstances; furthermore the fortunate man who is the vehicle of that word has no self-pride: he attributes all its goodness, and his act in spreading it, to the Will and Leave of Allah. *Cf.* the New Testament Parable of the Sower, (Matt. 13:1-9, Mark 4:1-9), or of the Mustard-seed (Matt. 13:31-32). In this Parable of the Qur'an there are fewer words and more spiritual meaning, and the emphasis is on more essential things.

26. And the parable of an evil Word is that of an evil tree: It is torn up by the root from the surface of the earth: it has no stability.(1902)

1902 The evil tree is the opposite of the goodly tree. The parallelism of contrast can be followed out in all the details of the last note.

27. Allah will establish in strength those who believe, with the word that stands firm, in this world and in the Hereafter; but Allah will leave, to stray, those who do wrong: Allah doeth what He willeth.(1903)

1903 His Will and Plan may be above comprehension but will prevail over all things. It is not like the mil of man, who may plan good things but is not necessarily able to carry them out.

28. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who(1904) have changed the favour of Allah. Into blasphemy and caused their people to descend to the House of Perdition?-

1904 There is a particular and a general meaning. The particular meaning is understood to be a reference to the Makkan Pagans who turned the House of Allah into a place for the worship of horrible idols and the practice of unseemly rites and cults. There is no real difficulty in accepting this as part of a late Makkan Surah even without supposing it to be a prophecy. The Makkan Pagans had turned Religion into a blasphemous superstition, and were misguiding their people, persecuting the true Messenger of Allah and all who followed his teaching. Their cup of iniquity seemed about full, and they seemed to be heading to perdition, as later events indeed showed to be the case.

The general meaning is also clear. Selfish men, when they seize power, want worship for themselves or their Phantasies, in derogation of the true God. Power, which should have been an instrument of good, becomes in their hands an instrument of evil. They and their people rush headlong to perdition. "These be thy gods, 0 Israel " has been a cry repeated again and again in history, in the face, or at the back, of men of God!

29. Into Hell? They will burn therein,- an evil place to stay in!

30. And they set up (idols) as equal to Allah, to mislead (men) from the Path! Say: "Enjoy (your brief power)! But verily ye are making straightway for Hell!"

31. Speak to my servants who have believed,(1905) that they may establish regular prayers, and spend (in charity) out of the Sustenance(1906) we have given them, secretly and openly, before the coming of a Day in which there will be neither mutual bargaining(1907) nor befriending.

1905 Putting ourselves back in the position which the Muslim community found themselves in Makkah just before the Hijrah, we can imagine how much encouragement and consolation they needed from the preaching, the Faith, and the steadfast character of Al Mustafa. Intolerant persecution was the order of the day; neither the life nor the property or reputation of the Muslims was safe. They are asked to find strength and tranquillity in prayer and in helping each other according to their needs and resources.

1906 Here, as elsewhere, "Sustenance" is to be taken in the literal as well as the metaphorical sense. There were many among the Muslims who were poor, or slaves, or depressed, because they were deprived of the means of livelihood on account of their Faith. They were to be fed, clothed, and sheltered, by those who had means. There were those who were ignorant and needed spiritual sustenance: they were to be taught and strengthened by those to whom Allah had given knowledge and firmness of character. Charity was to be ordinarily secret, so as to cut out all show or parade, and perhaps also lest the enemy should dry up those sources by unprincipled violene; but there must be much that had to be open and organised, so that all the needy could know where to go to be relieved.

1907 The great Day of Reckoning would be one on which all values would be changed. Wealth, as understood in this world, would no longer count. Should we not therefore use any wealth we have in this life, to give here and receive there? *Bay'* includes all bargaining-barter, purchase and sale, etc. In this world, where wealth has some value, let us spend it and get for ourselves "treasures in heaven." In the next life each man will stand on his merits and personal responsibility. One man cannot help another. Let us here help each other to become true and righteous, so that our personal account may be favourable there.

32. It is Allah Who hath created the heavens and the earth and sendeth down rain from the skies, and with it bringeth out fruits wherewith to feed you; it is He Who hath made the ships subject to you, that they may sail through the sea by His command; and the rivers (also) hath He made subject to you.(1908)

1908 We must realise that behind all of our strength, skill, and intelligence there is the power and goodness of Allah, Who gave us all these things. Man can understand and control the forces of nature so as to bring them to his own service: he can only do so, because (1) he has got these gifts from Allah, and (2) Allah has fixed definite laws in nature, of which he can take advantage by Allah's command and permission. He has been made Vicegerent on earth (2:30): Allah commanded the highest creatures to bow down to Adam (2:34). Man, by Allah's command, can use rain to produce food for himself: make ships to sail the seas: use rivers as highways, and cut canals for traffic and irrigation. Not only this, but even the heavenly bodies can (by Allah's command) contribute to his needs (see next verse).

33. And He hath made subject to you the sun and the moon,(1909) both diligently pursuing their courses; and the night and the day hath he (also) made subject to you.

1909 The sun gives out heat, which is the source of all life and energy on this planet, and produces the seasons of the year, by utilising which, man can supply

his needs, not only material, but immaterial in the shape of light, health, and other blessings. The sun and the moon together produce tides, and are responsible for atmospheric changes which are of the highest importance in the life of man. The succession of Day and Night is due to the apparent daily course of the sun through the skies; and the cool light of the moon performs other services different from those of warm daylight. Because there are laws here, which men can understand and calculate, he can use all such things for his own service, and in that sense the heavenly bodies are themselves made subject to him by Allah's command.

34. And He giveth you of all that ye ask for.(1910) But if ye count the favours of Allah, never will ye be able to number them. Verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude.(1911)

1910 Sincere and true prayer in faith is answered by Allah. Thus He gives us everything which a wise and benevolent Providence can give.

1911 I have tried to render the intensive forms of the Arabic by what I consider their near equivalent here: the phrase "given up to injustice and ingratitude" suggests habitual ignorance of just values and ingratitude for the innumerable gifts and favours which Allah has showered on mankind.

35. Remember Abraham said:(1912) "O my Lord! make this city one of peace and security: and preserve me and my sons from worshipping idols.(1913)

1912 The Prayer of Abraham, the True in Faith, the progenitor of the Semitic peoples and the Prototype of their Religion, is introduced in this place, to illustrate the points referred to in the preceding section 14:31-34, *viz.,* how the new Revelation through the Ka'bah bears out the universal Revelation of Prayer and Charity, Love of Allah and man, recognition of Allah's handiwork in nature, and insistence on man's turning away from false worship and ingratitude to Allah. Notice the four divisions into which it falls: (1) verses 35-36 are spoken by Abraham on his own behalf ("O my Lord!"); (2) verse 37-38 are spoken on behalf of his progeny ("O our Lord!") but with special reference to the elder branch, the children of Isma'il; (3) verses 39-40 are again a personal appeal, but both branches of his family, *viz.,* the sons of Isma'il and Isaac, are expressly mentioned; (4) verse 41 is a Prayer for himself, his parents, and all Believers, typifying that in the universality of Islam all nations are to be blessed. Jerusalem , for the Mosaic Law and the Gospel of Jesus, was the centre and symbol for the Jews, though of course all Allah's Truth is universal; Makkah, the centre of the Arabs, was to throw off its tribal character and become universal in spite of the Makkans themselves.

1913 *Cf.* 2:125-129. Abraham (with Isma'il) built the Ka'bah, and Abraham asks a blessing on his handiwork and forgiveness for such lapses into idolatry as both branches of his family might fall into.

36. "O my Lord! they have indeed led astray many among mankind; He then who follows my (ways) is of me, and he that disobeys me,- but Thou art indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

37. "O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation,(1914) by Thy Sacred House; in order, O our Lord, that they may establish regular Prayer: so fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them, and feed them with Fruits:(1915) so that they may give thanks.

1914 The Makkan valley is enclosed by hills on all sides, unlike Madinah, which has level cultivated plains. But just because of its natural isolation, it is fitted to be a centre for prayer and praise.

1915 *Cf.* 2:126, and n. 128. (The "Fruits" are there explained). The righteous, though they have to have sustenance, both in a literal and figurative sense, require also the love and sympathy of their fellow-men.

38. "O our Lord! truly Thou dost know what we conceal and what we reveal: for nothing whatever is hidden from Allah, whether on earth or in heaven.(1916)

1916 In Abraham's prophetic mind was the secret and open enmity or contempt which the Children of Israel were to have for the Children of Isma'il (Arabs). He prays to Allah that they may be united in Islam, as indeed they were, except a small remnant.

39. "Praise be to Allah, Who hath granted unto me in old age Isma´il and Isaac: for truly my Lord is He, the Hearer of Prayer!(1917)

1917 Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born (Gen. 21:5); and as Isma'il was 13 years old when Abraham was 99, (Gen. 17:24-25), Isma'il was also a son of his father's old age, having been born when Abraham was 86 years old. The younger son's progeny developed the Faith of Israel and that of Christ; the elder son's progeny perfected the more universal Faith of Islam, the Faith of Abraham the True.

40. O my Lord! make me one who establishes regular Prayer, and also (raise such) among my offspring(1918) O our Lord! and accept Thou my Prayer.

1918 Abraham prays for both branches of his family, having a wider vision than some of the later Children of Israel .

41. "O our Lord!(1919) cover (us)(1920) with Thy Forgiveness - me, My parents,(1921) and (all) Believers, on the Day that the Reckoning will be established!(1922)

1919 Read again n. 1912 above. Having prayed for his progeny, Abraham now prays for Allah's Grace on himself, his parents, and the whole Brotherhood of Faith, irrespective of family or race or time, to be perfected in the ideal of Islam.

1920 For the shades of meaning in the different words for forgiveness, see n. 110 to 2:109.

1921 *My parents.* Abraham's father was an idolater (43:26; 6:74). Not only that, but he persecuted the Faith of Unity and threatened Abraham with stoning and exile (19:46); and he and his people cast him into the Fire to be burned (21:52, 68). Yet Abraham's heart was tender, and he prayed for forgiveness for his father because of a promise which he made (9:114), though he renounced the land of his fathers (Chaldea).

1922 At the final Reckoning, all that may seem inequality or injustice in this world will be redressed. But the merits of the best of us will need Allah's Grace to establish us in that lasting felicity which is promised to the righteous. And Abraham, as the father of Prophecy, prayed for all-for the Universal Faith perfected in Islam.

42. Think not that Allah doth not heed the deeds of those who do wrong. He but giveth them respite against a Day when the eyes will fixedly stare in horror,-

43. They running forward with necks outstretched, their heads uplifted, their gaze returning not towards them, and their hearts a (gaping) void!(1923)

1923 A picture of horror. The evil ones, when they realise the situation, will be dazed: their eyes will stare without expression, and never move back; their necks will be outstretched; their heads uplifted in terror of the Judgement from on High; and their hearts become empty of all hope or intelligence as the physical heart might become empty of blood when circulation stops. In this state they will press forward to Judgement.

44. So warn mankind of the Day when the Wrath will reach them: then will the wrong-doers say: "Our Lord! respite us (if only) for a short term: we will answer Thy call, and follow the messengers!" "What! were ye not wont to swear aforetime that ye should suffer no decline?(1924)

1924 *Zawal* = decline from the zenith, as that of the sun; decline from the highest point reached by a heavenly body in its course through the sky. The ungodly are apt to think that their power will remain in the ascendant, on account of some material advantages given them temporarily by Allah, but they are constantly receiving warnings in history and revelation and from the example of others before them. There is a warning to the contemporary Pagan Makkans here; but the warning is perfectly general, and for all time.

45. "And ye dwelt in the dwellings of men who wronged their own souls; ye were clearly shown how We dealt with them; and We put forth (many) parables in your behoof!"

46. Mighty indeed were the plots which they made, but their plots were (well) within the sight of Allah, even though they were such as to shake the hills!

47. Never think that Allah would fail his messengers in His promise: for Allah is Exalted in power, - the Lord of Retribution.

48. One day the earth will be changed to a different earth, and so will be the Heavens,(1925) and (men) will be marshalled forth, before Allah, the One, the Irresistible;

1925 "A new earth and a new heaven" refers to the entirely changed conditions at the end of things as we know them. *Cf.* 20:105-107. 39:67-69, 84:3. (R).

49. And thou wilt see the sinners that day bound together in fetters;-(1926)

1926 *Cf.* 36:8, 60:71. 69:30. (Eds).

50. Their garments(1927) of liquid pitch,(1928) and their faces covered with Fire;

1927 *Sirbal;* plural, *Sarabil:* a garment or coat of mail, breast plate; something covering the most vital parts of the body; like the shirt or the Indian *kurta.*

1928 *Qatiran':* black pitch, a resinous substance exuding from certain kinds of trees like the terebinth or the pines, or distilled from wood or coal. It catches fire readily. Issuing from the upper garments *(Sarabil)* the flames soon cover the face, the most expressive part of man's essence or being. The metaphor of fetters (n 1926) is now changed to that of pitch, which darkens and sets on fire the soul of man.

51. That Allah may requite each soul according to its deserts;(1929) and verily Allah is swift in calling to account.(1930)

1929 *Its deserts: i.e.,* according to what it earned by its own acts, good or evil, in its life of probation.

1930 *Swift in calling into account:* We understand this in two significations. (1) Let not the wicked think that because Allah, out of His infinite grace and mercy, grants respite, therefore the retribution will be slow in coming. When the time comes in accordance with Allah's Plan and Wisdom, the retribution will come so swiftly that the ungodly will be surprised and they will wish they could get more respite (14:44.). (2) On the great Day of Reckoning, let it not be supposed that, because there will be millions of souls to be judged, there will be any delay in judgement as in a human tribunal. It will be a new world and beyond the flight of Time. Or if a metaphor from time as we conceive it in this world can be taken, it will be as it were in a twinkling of an eye (16:77).

52. Here is a Message for mankind: Let them take warning therefrom, and let them know that He is (no other than) One God:(1931) Let men of understanding take heed.

1931 Here is another aspect of the Truth of Unity. Allah being One, all justice is of one standard, for Truth is one, and we see it as soon as the scales of phenomena) diversity fall from our eyes. The one true Reality then emerges. Blessed are those who treasured this Truth in their souls already in their life of probation.



15. Al Hijr (The Rocky Tract)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A. L. R.(1932) These are the Ayat(1933) of Revelation,- of a Qur´an that makes things clear.(1934)

1932 For these mystic letters, see Introduction to Surah 10.

1933 *Cf.* 10:1. and n. 1382.

1934 Note how appropriately the different phrases in which the Qur'an is characterised bring out its different aspects as a Revelation. Let us just consider the phrases used at the beginning of the six Alif, Lam, Mim Surahs of which this is the last in order of arrangement. In 10:1 we read, "Ay at (or verses or Signs) of the Book of Wisdom", the theme being the wonders of Allah's creation, and its relation to His Revelation. In 11:1 we read, "a Book, with verses basic or fundamental, further explained in detail": the theme is Allah's Justice and Punishment, to preserve the fundamental scheme of His Laws. In 12:1 we read, "The Symbols (or verses) of the Perspicuous Book": the wonderful unfolding of Allah's Plan is explained in Joseph's story. In 13:1 we read, "The Signs (or verses) of the Book": the contrasts in the modes of Allah's Revelation and its reception by man are pointed out, but not illustrated by detailed examples as in Joseph's perspicuous story. In 14:1 we read "A Book . . . revealed ... to lead ... out of... darkness into light": the theme being Abraham's prayer for man to be rescued from the darkness of false worship into the light of Unity. Here in 15:1 we read, "Ayat (or verses) of Revelation-of a Qur'an that makes things clear (or perspicuous)": the theme being an explanation of evil, and how Allah's Truth is protected from it.

2. Again and again will those who disbelieve, wish that they had bowed (to Allah's Will) in Islam.(1935)

1935 The time must inevitably come when those who allow themselves to be deceived by falsehood or deliberately break Allah's Law will find themselves in a terrible plight. They will then wish ardently and again and again, that they had sought Allah's Will and walked in the light of Truth. That time may be early or late-in this life, or death, or at the Day of Judgement, but it must come. Man's own highest interest requires Chat he should awake to the Reality before it is too late for repentance.

3. Leave them alone, to enjoy(1936) (the good things of this life) and to please themselves: let (false) hope amuse them: soon will knowledge (undeceive them).(1937)

1936 Literally, "to eat", *Cf.* 5:66 and n. 776.

1937 The foolish and the wicked set great store by the pleasures of this world. In their pride they think they have all knowledge. In the fullness of knowledge they will see how wrong they were. Meanwhile those who have received the Light should not for a single moment wonder at the apparent prosperity of the ungodly in this world. They should leave them alone, confident in the goodness and justice of Allah.

4. Never did We destroy a population that had not a term decreed and assigned beforehand.(1938)

1938 *Kitab malum:* literally, "a writing known". There are many shades of meaning implied. (1) For every people, as for every individual, there is a definite Term assigned: their faculty of choice gives them the opportunity of moulding their will

according to Allah's Will, and thus identifying themselves with Allah's Universal Law. During that Term they will be given plenty of rope: after that Term is past, there will be no opportunity for repentance. (2) Neither the righteous nor the ungodly can hasten or delay the doom: Allah's Will must prevail, and He is All-Wise. (3) The destruction of a people is not an arbitrary punishment from Allah: the people bring it on themselves by their own choice: for the fixed Law or Decree of Allah is always made known to them beforehand, and in many ways.

5. Neither can a people anticipate its term, nor delay it.(1939)

1939 *Cf.* 7:34. Also see the last note.

6. They say: "O thou to whom the Message is being revealed! truly thou art mad (or possessed)!(1940)

1940 Al Mustafa was accused by the ungodly of being mad or possessed, because he spoke of higher things than they knew, and acted from motives purer and nobler than they could understand. So, in a minor degree, is the lot of all the righteous in the presence of an ungodly world. Their motives, actions, words, hopes, and aspirations are unintelligible to their fellows, and they are accused of being mad or out of their senses. But they know that they are on the right path, and it is the ungodly who are really acting against their own best interests.

7. "Why bringest thou not angels to us if it be that thou hast the Truth?"(1941)

1941 *Cf.* 6:8-9 and notes 840, 841. On the part of the unbelievers, this is a mere taunt. They neither believe in Allah nor in angels nor in revelation nor in any but material things. It is ridiculous to suppose that they could be taken seriously, (see also 41:44).

8. We send not the angels down except for just cause:(1942) if they came (to the ungodly), behold! no respite would they have!(1943)

1942 Angels are not sent down to satisfy the whim or curiosity of the unbelievers. They are sent to bring inspiration to Allah's messengers and to execute Allah's decrees.

1943 If the angels were to appear before the ungodly, it would mean that they came to execute just punishment, and then there would be no hope of respite possible for the ungodly.

9. We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).(1944)

1944 The purity of the text of the Qur'an through fourteen centuries is a foretaste of the eternal care with which Allah's Truth is guarded through all ages. All corruptions, inventions, and accretions pass away, but Allah's Pure and Holy Truth will never suffer eclipse even though the whole world mocked at it and was bent on destroying it. (R).

10. We did send messengers before thee amongst the religious sects(1945) of old:

1945 *Shiya',* plural of *Shi'ah*= a sect , a religious division. Mankind sees fragments of Truth at a time, and is apt to fall into fragments and divisions. All true Messengers of Allah come to reconcile these fragments or divisions, for they preach the true Gospel of Unity. So came Al Mustafa to bring back to Unity the many jarring sects among the Jews, Christians, and Pagans. His mission was held up to ridicule, but so was the mission of his predecessors. Mockery itself should not discourage the preachers of Truth.

11. But never came a messenger to them but they mocked him.

12. Even so do we let it creep into the hearts of the sinners -(1946)

1946 If evil and disbelief exist in the world, we must not be impatient or lose our faith. We must recognise that if such things are permitted, they are part of the Universal Plan and purpose of Allah, Who is All-Wise and All-Good, but Whose wisdom and goodness we cannot fully fathom. One consolation we have, and that is stated in the next verse and the next note.

13. That they should not believe in the (Message); but the ways of the ancients have passed away.(1947)

1947 Sects, divisions, and systems invented by men tend to pass away, but Allah's pure Truth of Unity endures forever. This we see in history when we study it on a large scale. *Cf.* the parable in 14:24-26. *Khalat* I have translated it here in the same sense as in 13:30, 10:102, and other places. Some Commentators give it a slightly different shade of meaning. The other meaning is seen in 48:23.

14. Even if We opened out to them a gate from heaven,(1948) and they were to continue (all day) ascending therein,

1948 *Cf.* 6:35. The spiritual kingdom is open to all to enter. But the entrance is not a mere matter of physical movement. It is a question of total change of heart. Evil must cease to be evil, before it can see or enjoy Good. If we could suppose Evil, like Bottom the weaver, to be "translated" or in some way carried up to Heaven, it would only think that the Truth was an illusion and the reality mere witchery. The taint is in its very nature, which must be purified and rendered fit for the reception of light, truth, and bliss.

15. They would only say: "Our eyes have been intoxicated: Nay, we have been bewitched by sorcery."

16. It is We Who have set out(1949) The Zodiacal Signs(1950) in the heavens, and made them fair-seeming to (all) beholders;

1949 Evil having been described, not as an external thing, hut as a taint of the soul, we have in this section a glorious account of the purity and beauty of Allah's Creation. Evil is a blot on it, not a normal feature of it. Indeed, the normal feature is the guard which Allah has put on it, to protect it from evil.

1950 In the countless millions of stars in the universe which we see, the first step in our astronomical knowledge is to find marvellous order, beauty, and harmony, on a scale of grandeur which we appreciate more and more as our knowledge increases. The first broad belt that we distinguish is the Zodiac, which marks the sun's path through the heavens year after year and the limit of the wanderings of the moon and the planets. We make twelve divisions of it and call them Signs of the Zodiac. Each marks the solar path through the heavens as we see it, month after month. We can thus mark off the seasons in our solar year, and express in definite laws the most important facts in meteorology, agriculture, seasonal winds, and tides. Then there are the mansions of the moon, the mapping out of the Constellations, and other marvellous facts of the heavens, some of which affect our physical life on this earth. But the highest lessons we can draw from them are spiritual. The author of this wonderful Order and Beauty is One, and He alone is entitled to our worship *(Cf.* 25:63).

17. And (moreover) We have guarded them(1951) from every evil spirit accursed:(1952)

1951 Taking the physical heavens, we can imagine the supreme melody or harmony-the Music of the Spheres-guarded from every disturbing force. If by any chance any rebellious force of evil seeks to obtain, by stealth, a sound of that harmony to which all who make themselves consonant are freely invited, it is pursued by a shooting star, for there can be no consonance between evil and good.

1952 *Rajim:* driven away with stones, rejected, accursed. *Cf.* 3:36.

18. But any that gains a hearing(1953) by stealth, is pursued by a flaming fire, bright (to see).(1954)

1953 *Cf.* 72:8-9. (Eds.).

1954 A shooting star appears to be meant. *Cf.* 37:10.

19. And the earth We have spread out(1955) (like a carpet); set thereon mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance.(1956)

1955 Majesty, order, beauty, and harmony are shown in all Allah's Creation, but especially in the heavens. Coming nearer to man, Allah's care for man and His goodness are shown (besides His other qualities) in His creation of the earth. In highly poetical language, the earth is described as spread out like carpet, on which the eternal hills act as weights to keep it steady *(Cf.* 13:3 and 16:15).

1956 And every kind of thing is produced on the earth in due balance and measure. The mineral kingdom supports the vegetable and they, in their turn, support the animal, and there is a link of mutual dependence between them. Excess is eliminated. The waste of one is made the food of another, and *vice versa.* And this is an infinite chain of gradation and interdependence.

20. And We have provided therein means of subsistence,- for you and for those for whose sustenance ye are not responsible.(1957)

1957 See last note. 'We provide sustenance of every kind, physical, mental, spiritual, etc., for you *(i.e.,* for mankind). But We do more. We provide for every one of Our creatures. And there are those of which mankind is not even cognisant. We provide for them also. There are those who may at first sight appear hostile to man, or whom man may consider hostile, such as wild and noxious animals. They are Our creatures, and We provide for them also, as they are Our creatures. But there is due order and balance in the economy of Our Universal Plan.

21. And there is not a thing but its (sources and) treasures(1958) (inexhaustible) are with Us; but We only send down thereof in due and ascertainable measures.(1959)

1958 *Khaza'in:* treasures; store houses; places where valuable things are accumulated, from which supplies are distributed from time to time as need arises.

1959 All the wonderful gifts and forces and energies which we see in the world around us have their sources and fountainheads with Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of the Worlds. And what we see or perceive or imagine is just a small portion of what exists. That portion is sent out to us and to our world according to our needs or its needs from time to time as the occasion arises. It is strictly limited according to rule and plan. Its source is unlimited and inexhaustible. In the same way the forces which we see operating around us, in nature or in the spiritual world, according to laws which we can grasp and ascertain, are mere derived forces, in the 2nd, 3rd, or 9th degree. Their source and ultimate fountainhead is with Allah.

22. And We send the fecundating(1960) winds, then cause the rain to descend from the sky, therewith providing you with water (in abundance), though ye are not the guardians(1961) of its stores.(1962)

1960 *Lawaqih,* plural of *l aqih,* from *laqaha,* to impregnate or fecundate the female date palm by putting the pollen of the male tree on to the ovaries of the female tree. The date palm is unisexual. The wind performs this office for many flowers. Here, by a bold metaphor, its fecundating quality is transferred to the clouds, which by means of rain produce all kinds of fruit, grain, and vegetation. The clouds as vapour are manipulated by the winds, which set up atmospheric currents resulting in condensation and the descent of rain. Note the appropriateness of the little particle "then", showing the connection of winds with rain.

1961 *Cf.* the previous verse, and n. 1958. Man may store water in cisterns, tanks, lakes, and headwaters of canals. But he has no control over its original sources, which are the clouds, which by the help of the winds, act as grand distributors of water over wide spaces of the world's surface.

1962 This verse must be understood as furnishing an example of illustration of what is said in the last verse.

23. And verily, it is We Who give(1963) life, and Who give death: it is We Who remain inheritors(1964) (after all else passes away).

1963 Note how the argument has mounted up from 15:16 onwards to 15:23— from things most remote from man to things touching his inmost being, and each of them in its own way is a wonderful instance of Allah's glory and goodness, and the beauty, order, and harmony of His creation. First, the heavens, the Zodiacal Signs, the stars, and the mysterious phenomena that we see above us; then the earth, and the perfect balance of life and forces therein, with man as an important factor, but not the only factor; then, the inexhaustible sources of energy, of which Allah alone is the fountainhead, but which come to us in measured proportions, as needed; and lastly, Life and Death itself, which will pass away but Allah will remain. A noble passage, and a fine vindication of Allah's wisdom and providence in dealing with His creatures.

1964 Literally, "We are the Heirs, or Inheritors," *Cf.* 3:180: "To Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth." See also the latter part of n. 988 to 6:165.

24. To Us are known those of you who hasten forward, and those who lag behind.(1965)

1965 *Cf.* 9:100, where the *Sabiqun* may perhaps correspond to the *Mustaqdimin* where. In that case the two classes are those who are the first to accept Faith and do deeds of righteousness and those who come later, but are still numbered with the righteous. A second alternative meaning may be: "those who preceded you in point of time and those who come after you in point of time: they are all known to Allah, and He will gather them all together on the Day of Judgement."

25. Assuredly it is thy Lord Who will gather them together: for He is perfect in Wisdom and Knowledge.

26. We created man from sounding clay,(1966) from mud moulded into shape;

1966 *Salsal:* dry clay which produces a sound, like pottery, *Cf.* 55:14. Taking verses 26 and 29 together, I understand the meaning to be: that man's body was formed from wet clay moulded into shape and then dried until it could emit sound (perhaps referring to speech); that it was then further fashioned and completed; that into the animal form thus fashioned was breathed the Spirit of Allah, which gave it a superiority over other Creation: and that the order for obeisance was then given.

27. And the Jinn race, We had created before, from the fire of a scorching wind.(1967)

1967 *Cf.* 6:100 and n. 929. Hidden or invisible forces are aptly typified as arising "from the fire of scorching winds."

28. Behold! thy Lord said to the angels: "I am about to create man, from sounding clay from mud moulded into shape;

29. "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him."(1968)

1968 Among other passages where the creation of Adam is referred to *cf.* the following: 2:30-39; 7:11-25. Note that here the emphasis is on three points: (1) the breathing of Allah's Spirit into man, *i.e.,* the faculty of God-like knowledge and will, which, if rightly used, would give man superiority over other creatures; (2) the origin of evil in arrogance and jealousy on the part of Satan, who saw only the lower side of man (his clay) and failed to see the higher side, the faculty brought in by the Spirit of Allah; (3) that this evil only touches those who yield to it, and has no power over Allah's sincere servants, purified by His grace (15:40, 42). Adam is not here mentioned by name, but only Man, whose symbol is Adam (see also 87:1-6).

30. So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together:

31. Not so(1969) Iblis:(1970) he refused to be among those who prostrated themselves.(1971)

1969 *Cf.* n. 49 to 2:34.

1970 *Iblis:* the name has in it the root idea of desperateness or rebellion. *(Cf.* n. 52 to 2:36).

1971 Apparently Iblis's arrogance has two grounds: (1) that man was made of clay while he was made of fire: (2) that he did not wish to do what others did. Both grounds were false: (1) because man had the spirit of Allah breathed into him: (2) because contempt of the angels who obeyed Allah's word showed not Iblis's superiority but his inferiority. The word *"bashar"* for man (verse 33) suggests a gross physical body.

32. ((Allah)) said: "O Iblis! what is your reason for not being among those who prostrated themselves?"

33. (Iblis) said: "I am not one to prostrate myself to man, whom Thou didst create from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape."

34. ((Allah)) said: "Then get thee out from here; for thou art rejected, accursed.

35. "And the curse shall be on thee till the day of Judgment."(1972)

1972 After the Day of Judgement the whole constitution of the universe will be different. There will be a new world altogether, on a wholly different plane. *(Cf.* 21:104).

36. (Iblis) said: "O my Lord! give me then respite(1973) till the Day the (dead) are raised."

1973 What was this respite! The curse on Iblis remained, *i.e.,* he was deprived of Allah's Grace and became in the spiritual world what an outlaw is in a political kingdom. An earthly kingdom may not be able to catch and destroy an outlaw. But Allah is Omnipotent, and such power as IblTs may have had can only come through the respite granted by Allah. The respite then is what is expressed in 15:39 below. In Allah's grant of limited free will to man is implied the faculty of choosing between good and evil, and the faculty is exercised through the temptations and allurements put forward by Satan, "the open enemy" of man. This is for the period of man's probation on this earth. Even so, no temptations have power over the sincere worshippers of Allah, who are purified by His grace.

37. ((Allah)) said: "Respite is granted thee

38. "Till the Day of the Time appointed."

39. (Iblis) said: "O my Lord! because Thou hast put me(1974) in the wrong, I will make (wrong) fair-seeming to them on the earth, and I will put them(1975) all in the wrong,-

1974 *Aghwaytani :* 'thrown me out of the way, put me in the wrong': *Cf.* 7:16. Satan as the Power of Evil cannot be straight or truthful even before Allah. By his arrogance and rebellion he fell; he attributes this to Allah. Between Allah's righteous judgement and Satan's snares and temptations there cannot be the remotest comparison. Yet he presumes to put them on an equal footing. He is taking advantage of the respite.

1975 Iblis (the Rebellious) is powerless against Allah. He turns therefore against man and becomes Satan (the Enemy).

40. "Except Thy servants among them, sincere and purified (by Thy Grace)."

41. ((Allah)) said: "This (way of My sincere servants) is indeed a way that leads straight to Me.(1976)

1976 To be sincere in the worship of Allah is to obtain purification from all stain of evil and exemption from all influence of evil. It changes the whole nature of man. After that, evil cannot touch him. Evil will acknowledge him to be beyond its power and will not even tempt him. Apart from such purified souls, everyone who worships Allah invites Allah's grace to protect him. But if he puts himself in the way of wrong and deliberately chooses evil, he must take the consequences. The blame is not even on Satan, the power of evil: it is on the sinner himself, who puts himself into his power: 14:22; 15:42.

42. "For over My servants no authority shalt thou have, except such as put themselves in the wrong and follow thee."

43. And verily, Hell is the promised abode for them all!

44. To it are seven Gates:(1977) for each of those gates is a (special) class (of sinners) assigned.

1977 The ways of sin are numerous, and if they are classified into seven, each of them points to a Gate that leads into Hell *(Cf.* 19:68).

45. The righteous (will be) amid gardens and fountains (of clear-flowing water).

46. (Their greeting will be): "Enter ye here in peace and security."

47. And We shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury:(1978) (they will be) brothers (joyfully) facing each other on thrones (of dignity).

1978 *Cf.* 7:43, and n. 1021. The hearts and minds will be so purified that all past rancour, jealousy, or sense of injury will be obliterated. The true Brotherhood will be realised there, when each will have his own dignity; there will be no question of invidious comparisons; each will face the others with joy and confidence. There will be no sense of toil or fatigue, and joy will last forever.

48. There no sense of fatigue shall touch them, nor shall they (ever) be asked to leave.

49. Tell My servants(1979) that I am indeed the Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful;

1979 We must realise both sides of Allah's attributes: His Mercy, Grace, and Forgiveness are unbounded; if we reject all this, His justice and punishment will also be beyond all that we can conceive.

50. And that My Penalty will be indeed the most grievous Penalty.

51. Tell them about the guests of Abraham.(1980)

1980 In illustration of the contrasts between Good and Evil, and the consequences that flow from them, we now have a reference to four incidents from the past, *viz.,:* (1) an incident from the story of Abraham; (2) from that of Lot, nephew of Abraham and the end of the Cities of the Plain, which he was sent to warn; (3) the People of the Wood; and (4) the People of the Rocky Tract *(Al Hijr),* after whom this Surah is called. As usual, the recital of Allah's abounding Grace comes first.

52. When they entered his presence and said, "Peace!" He said, "We feel afraid of you!"(1981)

1981 For a full understanding of this reference to the angels who were Abraham's guests and came to announce the birth of a son to him in his old age, read 11:69-73 and notes. The appearance of two strangers of uncommon appearance, who refused to partake of the host's sumptuous hospitality, made Abraham at first suspicious and afraid.

53. They said: "Fear not! We give thee glad tidings of a son endowed with wisdom."(1982)

1982 The birth of a son in old age, to a sonless father was glad tidings to Abraham personally. The birth of a son endowed with wisdom promised something infinitely more. Considering that the angels were divine messengers, the wisdom referred to was divine wisdom, and the event became an event of prime importance in the world's religious history. For Abraham became, through his progeny, the root of the three great universal religions diffused throughout the world.

54. He said: "Do ye give me glad tidings that old age has seized me? Of what, then, is your good news?"

55. They said: "We give thee glad tidings in truth: be not then in despair!"

56. He said: "And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord, but such as go astray?"(1983)

1983 *Cf.* 11:69. [Eds.].

57. Abraham said:(1984) "What then is the business on which ye (have come), O ye messengers (of Allah.?"

1984 When cordial understanding was established between Abraham and his guests and probably when the guests were about to depart, Abraham put a question to them. "What is the mission on which you are going?" It was further implied: "Is there anything I can do to help?" But no. The mission was one of punishment for abominable sins. Note that the mention of Allah's Wrath is always linked with that of Allah's Mercy, and the Mercy comes first. The same angels that came to punish Sodom and Gomorrah were charged first to give the good news of Allah's Mercy to Abraham in the shape of a long line of teachers of righteousness.

58. They said: "We have been sent to a people (deep) in sin,(1985)

1985 The Cities of the Plain round the Dead Sea , which to this day is called Bahr Lut. They were given to unspeakable abominations. Read in this connection 11:77-83 and notes.

59. "Excepting the adherents of Lut: them we are certainly (charged) to save (from harm),- All -(1986)

1986 Here, again, Allah's saving Grace it linked with His Wrath, and is mentioned first.

60. "Except his wife, who, We have ascertained, will be among those who will lag behind."(1987)

1987 See 11:81, and n. 1577.

61. At length when the messengers arrived among the adherents(1988) of Lut,

1988 *Al* means people who adhere to the ways and teaching of a great teacher; *e.g., Ali Muhammad:* it does not necessarily mean race or descendants. *Ahl* (15:65 below) usually implies "household" but maybe taken in an extended sense to include people generally, see 15:67. *Qawm* (15:62) maybe a collection of aggregate people. In 11:70 the hostile inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain are Called *qawmi Lut* (the People of Lut). *Ashab* (companions) refers to a Group rather than to a People: *Cf.* 15:78. (R).

62. He said: "Ye appear to be uncommon folk."

63. They said: "Yea, we have come to thee to accomplish that of which they doubt.(1989)

1989 The unusual appearance of the angels struck Lot as it had struck Abraham, *(Cf.* n. 5007). Knowing the abominable vices to which the cities were addicted, he feared to entertain handsome young men. They at once disclosed their mission to him. In effect they said: "You, Lot , have been preaching in vain to these wicked cities. When you warn them of their inevitable end—Destruction—they laugh and doubt. Now their doubt will be resolved. Their destruction will be accomplished before the morning."

64. "We have brought to thee that which is inevitably(1990) due, and assuredly we tell the truth.

1990 Another meaning of *al Haqq.* The Punishment which is justly and inevitably due, which must certainly come to pass. *(Cf.* 22:18, 16:36, and 16:38).

65. "Then travel by night with thy household, when a portion of the night (yet remains), and do thou bring up the rear: let no one amongst you look back, but pass on whither ye are ordered."

66. And We made known this decree to him, that the last remnants of those (sinners) should be cut off by the morning.(1991)

1991 As the last remnants of the wicked were to be cut off, and as the Mercy of Allah wished to save every true soul who might be with Lot , Allah's decree was made known to Lot, so that he might save his adherents.

67. The inhabitants of the city came in (mad) joy (at news of the young men).(1992)

1992 They were addicted to unnatural crime, and the news of the advent of handsome young men inflamed them. How true it is that at the very verge of destruction, men rush blindly to their fate, and cut off any last hope of repentance and mercy for themselves. *Cf.* 15:72 below.

68. Lut said: "These are my guests: disgrace me not:

69. "But fear Allah, and shame me not."

70. They said: "Did we not forbid thee (to speak) for all and sundry?"(1993)

1993 I understand the meaning to be that Lot, the only righteous man in the city, had frequently remonstrated with the inhabitants against their unnatural crimes, and they had forbidden him to speak to them again on behalf of anyone, "as if (they might tauntingly say) "he was the protector of all and sundry."

Some Commentators understand the verse to mean: 'Did we not forbid thee to entertain any strangers?'

71. He said: "There are my daughters (to marry), if ye must act (so)."(1994)

1994 *Cf.* 11:78, n. 1575. "My daughters" in the mouth of a venerable man may mean young girls of the city, which would be appropriate considering the large number of men who came to besiege Lot 's house.

72. Verily, by thy life (O Prophet), in their wild intoxication, they wander in distraction, to and fro.(1995)

1995 The wild, mad fury of passion and sin attains its own destruction and cuts off the fast hope of repentance or mercy.

73. But the (mighty) Blast(1996) overtook them before morning,

1996 *Al Sayhah,* the mighty Blast, is mentioned as accompanying earthquakes: *Cf.* 11:67-94. Here it was the violent wind and noise accompanying the shower of brimstones, possibly with some volcanic action.

74. And We turned (the cities) upside down, and rained down on them brimstones hard as baked clay.(1997)

1997 *Cf.* 11:82 and notes, in which the word *Sijil and* its origin are explained.

75. Behold! in this are Signs for those who by tokens do understand.

76. And the (cities were) right on the highroad.(1998)

1998 The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were utterly destroyed, and even their precise position cannot be identified. But the brimstone plain of the tract still exists, right on the highway between Arabia and Syria . To the traveller in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea , the whole locality presents a sense of dismal desolation which truly suggests the awful punishment for unspeakable crimes. *(Cf.* 37:137).

77. Behold! in this is a sign for those who believe!(1999)

1999 Verse 75 refers to all who have the intelligence to grasp the Signs of Allah. Verses 76-77 especially refer to those who use the Arabia-Syrian highroad. The desolation is especially brought home to them.

78. And the Companions of the Wood(2000) were also wrong-doers;

2000 "Companions of the Wood": *Ashab al Aykah.* Perhaps *Aykah is* after all a proper noun, the name of a town or tract. Who were the Companions of the Aykah? They are mentioned four times in the Qur'an, *viz.,* here, and in 26:176-191; 38:13; and 50:14. The only passage in which any details are given is 26:176-191. There we are told that their Prophet was Shu'ayb, and other details given correspond to those of the Madyan, to whom Shu'ayb was sent as Prophet: see 7:85-93. In my notes to that passage 1 have discussed the question of Shu'ayb and the Madyan people. It is reasonable to suppose that the Companions of the Wood were either the same as the Madyan, or a group among them or in their neighbourhood.

79. So We exacted retribution from them. They were both(2001) on an open highway, plain to see.

2001 Both: *i.e.,* The Cities of the Plain and the Companions of the Aykah.

80. The Companions of the Rocky Tract(2002) also rejected the messengers:

2002 "The Rocky Tract" is undoubtedly a geographical name. On the maps of Arabia will be found a tract called the *Hijr,* north of Madinah. Jabal *Hijr is* about 150 miles north of Madinah. The tract would fall on the highway to Syria . This was the country of Thamud. For them and the country see 7:73, n. 1043.

81. We sent them Our Sings, but they persisted in turning away from them.

82. Out of the mountains(2003) did they hew (their) edifices, (feeling themselves) secure.

2003 Remains of these rock edifices in the *Hijrare* still found, and the City of Petra is not more than 380 miles from Jabal *Hijr.* See n. 1043 to 7:73. " Petra " in Greek means "Rock". For the Inscriptions found there, and their significance, see Appendix VII to S. 26.

83. But the (mighty) Blast(2004) seized them of a morning,

2004 The mighty rumbling noise and wind accompanying an earthquake. See 7:78, 1047.

84. And of no avail to them was all that they did (with such art and care)!

85. We created not the heavens, the earth, and all between them, but for just ends.(2005) And the Hour is surely coming (when this will be manifest). So overlook (any human faults) with gracious forgiveness.(2006)

2005 Allah's Creation is all for a true, just, and righteous purpose. *Cf.* 10:5. It is not for mere whim or sport: 21:16.

2006 The Hour will not be long delayed when the true Design and Pattern of Life will be manifest. We must not be impatient, if there appear to be, to our limited vision, apparent injustices. We must bear and forbear, and as far as our own personal feelings are concerned, we must overlook other people's faults with "a gracious forgiveness" *(Cf.* 30:8).

86. For verily it is thy Lord who is the Master-Creator,(2007) knowing all things.

2007 *Khallaq:* the emphatic intensive form, as meaning the Creator, *Who* is perfected in His skill and knowledge, and Whose creation answers perfectly to His designs. Therefore no one should think that anything has gone wrong in Allah's creation. What may seem out of joint is merely the result of our shortsighted standards. It often happens that what appears to us to be evil or imperfect or unjust is a reflection of our own imperfect minds. See the next two verses and notes.

87. And We have bestowed upon thee the Seven Oft-repeated (Verses)(2008) and the Grand Qur´an.

2008 The Seven Oft-repeated Verses are usually understood to be the Opening Surah, the *Fatihah.* They sum up the whole teaching of the Qur'an. What can be a more precious gift to a Muslim than the glorious Qur'an or any Surah of it? Worldly wealth, honour, possessions, or anything else, sinks into insignificance in comparison with it *(Cf.* n. 17).

88. Strain not thine eyes. (Wistfully) at what We have bestowed on some(2009) of them, nor grieve over them:(2010) but lower thy wing (in gentleness)(2011) to the believers.

2009 It may be that other people have worldly goods which worldly men envy. Do they necessarily bring happiness? Even the temporary pleasure that they may give is not unmixed with spiritual poisons, and even so, will not last. The man of God looks with wistful eyes at other things-the favour and countenance of Allah.

2010 The Prophet of Allah, in his human love and sympathy, may grieve over certain classes of people who are puffed up with false notions and callous to the Message of Allah. But he should not make himself unhappy. There is no flaw in Allah's Plan, and it must prevail. This was addressed in the first instance to Al Mustafa, but in a minor degree, it applies to all righteous men. (R).

2011 The metaphor is from a bird who lowers her wing in tender solicitude for her little ones. *Cf. 1* 7:24, where it is applied to "lowering the wing" to aged parents.

89. And say: "I am indeed he that warneth openly and without ambiguity,"-(2012)

2012 In the ministry of Al Mustafa there was no mincing of matters, no compromises with evil. Evil was denounced in unambiguous terms. *Mubin* implies both openness and clearness, *i.e.,* freedom from ambiguity.

90. (Of just such wrath) as We sent down on those who divided (Scripture into arbitrary parts),-(2013)

2013 The Commentators differ as to the precise significance of verses 90 and 91. Are the persons referred to in the two verses the same, or different? And who were they? I adopt the view, for which there is good authority, that the two classes of persons were different but similar. Verse 90,1 think, refers to the Jews and Christians, who took out of Scripture what suited them, and ignored or rejected the rest: 2:85 and 101. For verse 91 see next note.

91. (So also on such) as have made Qur´an into shreds (as they please).(2014)

2014 The Makkan Pagans, in the early days of Islam, in order to dishonour and ridicule the Qur'an, divided what was so far revealed, into bits, and apportioned them to people coming on pilgrimage to Makkah by different routes, slandering and abusing the Prophet of Allah.

92. Therefore, by the Lord, We will, of a surety, call them to account,

93. For all their deeds.(2015)

2015 Those who ridicule Scripture in any form will all be called to account for their insolence, for they are all alike.

94. Therefore expound openly what thou art commanded, and turn away from those who join false gods with Allah.

95. For sufficient are We unto thee against those who scoff,-(2016)

2016 If the whole world is ranged against the Prophet of Allah, as was at one time the case with the Prophet, and scoffs at all that is sacred, the sense of Allah's presence and protection outweighs all. And after all, the scoffers are creatures of a day. Soon will they find their level, and be undeceived as to all their falsehoods. But the Truth of Allah endures forever. (R).

96. Those who adopt, with Allah, another god: but soon will they come to know.

97. We do indeed know how thy heart is distressed(2017) at what they say.

2017 Literally, 'that thy breast is constrained.'

98. But celebrate the praises of thy Lord, and be of those who prostrate themselves in adoration.

99. And serve thy Lord until there come unto thee the Hour that is Certain.(2018)

2018 *Yaqin:* Certainty; the Hour that is Certain; death.

16. Al Nahl (The Bee)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. (Inevitable) cometh (to pass) the Command of Allah.(2019) seek ye not then to hasten it: Glory to Him, and far is He above having the partners they ascribe unto Him!

2019 This is an answer to the taunt of the Pagans, who said: "If there is a god, the One True God, as you say, with unified control, why does He not punish the wrongdoers at once?" The answer is: "The decree of Allah will inevitably come to pass; it will come soon enough; when it comes, you will wish it were delayed; how foolish of you to wish even to cut off your last hope of forgiveness?"

2. He doth send down His angels with inspiration of His Command, to such of His servants as He pleaseth, (saying): "Warn (Man) that there is no god but I: so do your duty unto Me."(2020)

2020 The Pagans, with their multiplicity of gods and goddesses, good and evil, could play one off against another. That is mere mockery of religion. With such conceptions, man cannot understand the Unity of Design in the Universe nor realise the Power and Glory of the One True God, to Whom alone worship and service are due.

3. He has created the heavens and the earth for just ends:(2021) Far is He above having the partners they ascribe to Him!

2021 Not for sport, or fortuitously and without Design. *Cf.* 15:85. Surely the Unity of Design in Creation also proves the Unity of Allah their Creator.

4. He has created man from a sperm-drop; and behold this same (man) becomes an open disputer!(2022)

2022 Man's physical origin is lowly. Yet do men go back to material things, and neglect or dispute about the highest things in Life.

5. And cattle He has created(2023) for you (men): from them ye derive warmth, and numerous benefits,(2024) and of their (meat) ye eat.

2023 Why will you go back to material things, considering that material things are made subservient to your use and enjoyment in various ways as suggested in the clauses that follow? *(Cf.* 40:79-80).

2024 From wool, and hair, and skins, and milk. Camel's hair makes warm robes and blankets; and certain kinds of goats yield hair which makes similar fabrics. Sheep yield wool, and llamas alpaca for similar uses. The skins and furs of many animals yield warm raiment or make warm rugs or bedding. The females of many of these animals yield good warm milk, a nourishing and wholesome diet. Then the flesh of many of these animals is good to eat. There are other uses, which the animals serve, and which are referred to later.

6. And ye have a sense of pride and beauty in them as ye drive them home in the evening, and as ye lead them forth to pasture in the morning.(2025)

2025 The good man is proud of his cattle and is good to them. As they go to, and return from, pasture, morning and evening, he has a sense of his power and wealth and their beauty and docility. Will not man turn from these material facts to the great spiritual truths and purpose behind them?

7. And they carry your heavy loads to lands that ye could not (otherwise) reach except with(2026) souls distressed: for your Lord is indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful,

2026 The cattle and animals also carry loads, and thus make intercommunication between different lands easy. But for them there would have been many difficulties, not only physical, but psychological. Weary men carrying loads are in no mood for social and spiritual intercourse. This intercourse is made possible by the kindness and mercy of Allah.

8. And (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride and use for show;(2027) and He has created (other) things of which ye have no knowledge.(2028)

2027 Horses, mules, and donkeys as well as other animals may be beasts of burden, but they may also be pedigree animals bred for beauty and for all those more refined uses, such as processions, in which grace and elegance is the predominant feature.

2028 If we examine the history of transport, there have been vast changes through the ages, from rude pack animals to fine equipages, and then through mechanical contrivances, such means of transport as elegant coaches, tramways, and railways, useful motor lorries and Rolls-Royce cars, and airships and aeroplanes of all descriptions. At any given point of time, many of those were yet unknown to man. Nor can we suppose the limits to have been reached now or that it will ever be reached at any future time. Through the mind and ingenuity of man it is Allah that creates new things hitherto unknown to man.

9. And unto Allah leads straight(2029) the Way, but there are ways that turn aside: if Allah had willed, He could have guided all of you.

2029 Through material things "the Way" does always lead to Allah. But some minds are so obsessed with material things that they miss the pointers to the spiritual. Allah could have forced all to the true Way, but in His Will and Plan is the training of man's will, and that is done by the Signs in nature and Revelation.

10. It is He who sends down rain from the sky: from it ye drink, and out of it (grows) the vegetation on which ye feed your cattle.

11. With it He produces for you corn, olives, date-palms, grapes and every kind of fruit: verily in this is a sign for those who give thought.(2030)

2030 The least thought and study of nature will show you Allah's wise and benign providence in making the processes of nature subserve man's use and refined life. A higher degree of intelligence and study is required ("men who are wise") to understand Allah's Signs to man in the process connected with the heavenly bodies (verse 12). And a still higher spiritual understanding ("men who celebrate His praises" with gratitude) to realise the marvellous gradation, colours, and nuances in the creatures on this little globe of ours (verse 13). Reason this out very carefully.

12. He has made subject to you the Night and the Day;(2031) the sun and the moon; and the stars are in subjection by His Command: verily in this are Signs for men who are wise.

2031 The Night and Day are caused by astronomical rotations. What is important for man to note is how Allah has given intelligence to man to make use of this alternation for work and rest; how man can, as soon as he rises from the primitive stage, get over their inequalities by artificial illuminants, such as vegetable or mineral oils, coal, gas, or electricity, which ultimately are derived from the stored-up energy of the sun; how the sun's heat can be tempered by various artificial means and can be stored up for use by man as required; how man can be independent of the tides caused by the moon and the sun, which formerly controlled navigation, but which no longer stand in man's way, with his artificial harbours and great sea-going ships; how navigation was formerly subject to direct observation of the Polar Star and other stars but how the magnetic needle and charts have now completely altered the position, and man can calculate and to a certain extent control magnetic variations, etc. In such ways the sun, the moon, and the stars themselves become useful servants to him, all by Allah's gift and His Command, without which there would have been no laws governing them and no intelligence to make use of them.

13. And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colours (and qualities):(2032) verily in this is a sign for men who celebrate the praises of Allah (in gratitude).(2033)

2032 Whose heart has not been moved by the glorious gradation of colours in the sunset clouds? The gradations are infinite, and it is only the eye of an artist that can express their collective beauty. They are but a type of the infinite variety and gradation of qualities in the spiritual sphere even in the little space of our own globe. The big things that can be measured and defined have been spoken of before. Here we have mention of the subtle nuances in the spiritual world which can only be perceived by men who are so high in spiritual insight that their only reaction is to "celebrate the praises of Allah" in gratitude for His infinite Mercies.

2033 Read again n. 2030 above, and see how subtly we are led up from the perception of the big to the perception of the subtle and delicate colours and qualities in the spiritual world.

14. It is He Who has made(2034) the sea subject, that ye may eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender,(2035) and that ye may extract therefrom ornaments to wear;(2036) and thou seest the ships therein that plough the waves, that ye may seek (thus) of the bounty of Allah(2037) and that ye may be grateful.

2034 We have gone up in a climax of material things from the big to the subtle in the sky and the earth. Here we have another climax as regards the things of the sea. We get the delicate flesh of fishes and marine creatures of all kinds; we get the treasures of the deep: pearls, coral, amber, and things of that kind; and we have the stately ships ploughing the waves, for maritime commerce and intercourse, for unifying mankind, and for reaching the spiritual bounty of Allah which can best be expressed by the boundless ocean.

2035 Connoisseurs know the delicate flavours of sea fish, such as the pomfret of the Indian Ocean, the herring of the North Atlantic, the mullet of Marseilles , and many other kinds. *Tari,* translated "fresh and tender," also refers to the soft moist nature of fresh fish. It is another wonder of Allah that salt water should produce flesh of such fresh, tender, and delicate flavour.

2036 Diving for pearls—in both the primitive and the more advanced form—is another instance of man's power over apparently inaccessible depths of the sea.

2037 After the material benefits which we get from the sea, we are asked to consider things of higher import to the spirit of man. There is the beautiful ship which stands as the symbol of international commerce and intercourse, things that may be of material benefit, but which have a higher aspect in unifying man and making his civilisation more universal. These are first steps in seeking of the "bounty of Allah" through the sea. But there are higher aspects. Navigation and international intercourse increase knowledge, which in its higher aspects should clean the mind and make it fitter to approach Allah. The salt water, which covers nearly 72 percent of the surface of the globe, is itself a purifying and sanitary agent, and is a good symbol of the higher bounties of Allah, which are as boundless as the ocean *(Cf.* 45:12).

15. And He has set up on the earth mountains(2038) standing firm, lest it should shake with you; and rivers and roads; that ye may guide yourselves;(2039)

2038 *Cf.* 13:3 and 15:19. Here and elsewhere the earth is spoken of as a spacious carpet beneath our feet and the hills as a steadying agent to keep the carpet from rolling or shaking about. In 78:7 they are spoken of as pegs or stakes (see also 21:31 and 27:61). (R).

2039 In this passage (16:15-16) we have the metaphor of the fixed mountains further allegorised. In these verses the keywords are indicated by the symbols for man's guidance *(tahtadun).* First, the physical symbols are indicated: the mountains that stand firm and do not change from day to day in the landscape, unlike shifting sand dunes, or the coastline of the sea, or river and streams, which frequently change their courses; then we have rivers and roads, which are more precise and therefore more useful, though less permanent; then we have *'alamat* (signposts), any kinds of signs erected by man, like direction posts, lighthouses or beacons, or provided in nature, as tall trees, etc.; and finally, we have the polestar, and now the magnetic needle, with its variations marked on navigation charts. All these are symbols for the higher Guidance which Allah provides for the spirit of man. See next note.

16. And marks and sign-posts; and by the stars (men) guide themselves.(2040)

2040 See last note. Let us examine the completed allegory. As there are beacons, landmarks and signs to show the way to men on the earth, so in the spiritual world. And it is ultimately Allah Who provides them, and this is His crowning Mercy. Like the mountains, there are spiritual landmarks in the missions of the Great Teachers: they should guide us, or teach us to guide ourselves, and not shake hither and thither like a ship without a rudder or people without Faith. As rivers and streams mark out their channels, smoothing out levels, so we have wholesome laws and customs established, to help us in our lives. Then we have the example of Great Men as further signposts: "Lives of great men all remind us. We can make our lives sublime." In long distance travel, the polestar and the magnetic needle are our guides: so in our long distance journey to the other world, we have ultimately to look to heavenly guidance or its reflections in Allah's Revelations.

17. Is then He Who creates like one that creates not? Will ye not receive admonition?(2041)

2041 The Supreme Majesty of Allah having been set out in His favors of all kinds, it will be seen at once that the worship of any other than Allah is meaningless and ridiculous. Shall we not take the hint and understand?

18. If ye would count up the favours of Allah, never would ye be able to number them: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.(2042)

2042 Of all Allah's favours innumerable, His Mercy and Forgiveness in the spiritual plane are the greatest, and of eternal value to us in our future Lives.

19. And Allah doth know what ye conceal, and what ye reveal.

20. Those whom they invoke besides Allah create nothing and are themselves created.(2043)

2043 Allah is the only Creator and the Ultimate Reality. Everything else is created by Him, and reflects His glory. How foolish then to worship any other Allah!

21. (They are things) dead, lifeless: nor do they know when they will be raised up.(2044)

2044 Idols are dead wood or stone. If men worship stars, or heroes, or prophets, or great men, they too have no life except that which was given by Allah. In themselves, they are lifeless. If they worship figments of the imagination, they are reflections in a double degree, and have no life in themselves. All these things will be raised up on the Last Day, in order that false worshippers may be confronted with them. But they themselves cannot tell when that Day will be.

22. Your Allah is one Allah. as to those who believe not in the Hereafter, their hearts refuse to know, and they are arrogant.(2045)

2045 Everything points to Allah, the One True Eternal God. If so, there is a Hereafter, for He has declared it. Insofar as people do not believe this, the fault is in their Will: they do not wish to believe, and the motive behind is arrogance, the sin which brought about the fall of Iblis: 2:34. (R).

23. Undoubtedly Allah doth know what they conceal, and what they reveal:(2046) verily He loveth not the arrogant.

2046 *Cf.* 16:19, where the same words refer to man generally. Whether he conceals or reveals what is in his heart, Allah knows it, and as Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, His grace is available as His highest favour if man will take it. Here the reference is to those who "refuse to know", who reject Allah's guidance out of arrogance. Allah "loveth not the arrogant". Such men deprive themselves of Allah's grace.

24. When it is said to them, "What is it that your Lord(2047) has revealed?" they say, "Tales of the ancients!"

2047 When the arrogant Unbelievers are referred to some definite argument or illustration from Scripture, they dismiss it contemptuously with the remark, "Tales of the ancients!" In this, they are not only playing with their own conscience, but misleading others, with perhaps less knowledge than themselves. *(Cf.* 16:30).

25. Let them bear, on the Day of Judgment, their own burdens in full, and also (something) of the burdens of those without knowledge, whom they(2048) misled. Alas, how grievous the burdens they will bear!

2048 Their responsibility or crime is twofold: (1) that they rejected Allah's Message, and (2) that they misled others. Their Penalty will also be double. In 6:164, we are told that "no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another". This is against the doctrine of vicarious atonement. Every man is responsible for his own sins: but the sin of misleading others is a sin of the misleader himself, and he must suffer the penalty for that also, without relieving those misled, of their responsibility.

26. Those before them did also plot (against Allah.s Way): but Allah took their structures from their foundations, and the roof fell down on them from above; and the Wrath seized them from directions they did not perceive.(2049)

2049 Evil will always devise plots against the Prophets of Allah. So was it with al Mustafa, and so wait with the Prophets before him. But the imposing structures which the ungodly build up (metaphorically) collapse at the Command of Allah, and they are often punished from quarters from which they least expected punishment, (*Cf.* 16:45 and, 59:25). For example, the Quraysh were confident in their number's, their organisation. and their superior equipment. But on the field of Badr they collapsed where they expected victory.

27. Then, on the Day of Judgment, He will cover them with shame, and say: "Where are My ´partners´ concerning whom ye used to dispute (with the godly)?" Those endued with knowledge(2050) will say: "This Day, indeed, are the Unbelievers covered with shame and misery,-

2050 The worshippers of false gods (the ungodly, the Unbelievers) will be unable to reply when brought before the Judgement Seat. The comment of those "endued with knowledge"--the Prophets and Teachers whom they had rejected-will be by way of indictment and explanation of the position of those before the Judgement Seat.

28. "(Namely) those whose lives the angels take in a state of wrong-doing to their own souls."(2051) Then would they offer submission (with the pretence), "We did(2052) no evil (knowingly)." (The angels will reply), "Nay, but verily Allah knoweth all that ye did;

2051 That is, those who died in a state of *kufr,* or rebellion against Allah, which was really wrongdoing against their own souls.

2052 The excuse is a mere pretence. At first they were too dazed to reply. When they reply, they cannot deny the facts, but resort to the sinner's excuse of saying that they sinned through ignorance, and that their motives were not wrong. Such a plea raises a question of hidden thoughts which are difficult to appraise before a human tribunal. But here they are before their Divine Author, Who knows every secret of their souls, and before Whom no false plea can be of any value. So they are concerned.

29. "So enter the gates of Hell, to dwell therein. Thus evil indeed is the abode of the arrogant."

30. To the righteous (when) it is said, "What is it that your Lord(2053) has revealed?" they say, "All that is good." To those who do good, there is good in this world, and the Home of the Hereafter is even better(2054) and excellent indeed is the Home of the righteous,-

2053 The contrast and parallelism is with 16:24, where the ungodly in their levity and their deliberate rejection of guidance find no profit from Allah's revelation.

2054 Unlike the ungodly, the good find good everywhere--in this world and in the Hereafter; because they understand and are in accord with the truths around them.

31. Gardens of Eternity which they will enter: beneath them flow (pleasant) rivers: they will have therein all that they wish: thus doth Allah reward the righteous,-

32. (Namely) those whose lives the angels take in a state(2055) of purity, saying (to them), "Peace be on you; enter ye the Garden, because of (the good) which ye did (in the world)."

2055 *In a state of purity:* from the evils of this world, from want of faith and want of grace. Purity from such evil is the mark of true Islam, and those who die in such purity will be received into Felicity with a salutation of Peace.

33. Do the (ungodly) wait until the angels come to them, or there comes the Command of thy Lord (for their doom)?(2056) So did those who went before them. But Allah wronged them not: nay, they wronged their own souls.

2056 That is, until death comes to them, or some Punishment in this life, itself, which precludes them from repentance and the Mercy of Allah.

34. But the evil results of their deeds overtook them, and that very (Wrath) at which they had scoffed hemmed them in.

35. The worshippers of false gods say: "If Allah had so willed, we should not have worshipped aught but Him - neither we(2057) nor our fathers,- nor should we have prescribed prohibitions(2058) other than His." So did those who went before them. But what is the mission of messengers but to preach the Clear Message?(2059)

2057 The age-old argument: if Allah is Ail-Powerful, why did He not force all persons to His Will? This ignores the limited free will granted to man, which is the whole basis of Ethics. Allah gives man every opportunity of knowing and understanding things, hut He does nor force him, for that would be against the whole Plan on which our present Life is constituted.

2058 The Pagan Arabs prescribed various arbitrary prohibitions in the matter of meat: see 6:143-145, These, of course, are not recognised by Islam, which also removed some of the restrictions of the Jewish Law: 6:146. The general meaning, however, is far wider. Men erect their own taboos and prohibitions, barriers and restrictions, and ascribe them to Religion. This is worng, and more consonant with Pagan practice than with Islam.

2059 *Clear Message: Mubin:* in three senses: (1) a Message clear and unambiguous; (2) one that makes all things clear to those who try understand, because it accords with their own nature as created by Allah; (3) one preached openly and to everone.

36. For We assuredly sent amongst every People a messengers,(2060) (with the Command), "Serve Allah, and eschew Evil": of the People were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom error became(2061) inevitably (established). So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the Truth).

2060 Even though Allah's Signs are everywhere in Nature and in men's own conscience, yet in addition Allah has sent human Messengers to every People to call their attention to the Good and turn them from Evil. So they cannot pretend that Allah has abandoned them or that He does not care what they do. His divine Grace always invites their will to choose the right *(Cf.* 10:47 and 35:24).

2061 While some people accept the guidance of the divine Grace, others so surrender themselves to Evil that it must necessarily follow that evil obtains a grip over them. They have only to travel through time or space to see the end of those who abandoned their lights and surrendered to Evil and error. For *haqqah* and the meaning of *haqq* in this connection *C f.* 15:64.

37. If thou art anxious for their guidance, yet Allah guideth not such as He leaves to stray.(2062)And there is none to help them.

2062 When once Allah's Grace is rejected by anyone, such a person loses all help and guidance. Such persons are then outside Allah's Grace, and therefore they are outside guidance.

38. They swear their strongest oaths(2063) by Allah, that Allah will not raise up those who die:(2064) Nay, but it is a promise (binding) on Him in truth: but most among mankind realise it not.

2063 The strongest oath of the Pagan Arabs would be by the Supreme Allah: less strong oaths would be by their subordinate deities, or their ancestors, or other things they valued or held sacred.

2064 The usual Pagan creed is: "If there is a God, it does not follow that He will raise us up: why should He?" The answer is twofold: (1) Allah has promised it, and Allah's promise is true, (2) He must finally manifest the Truth to them, convict them of their falsehood, and enforce their personal responsibility (16:39).

39. (They must be raised up), in order that He may manifest to them the truth of that wherein they differ, and that the rejecters of Truth may realise that they had indeed (surrendered to) Falsehood.(2065)

2065 See the last note.

40. For to anything which We have willed, We but say the word, "Be", and it is.(2066)

2066 Allah's "Word" is in itself the Deed. Allah's Promise is in itself the Truth. There is no interposition of Time or Condition between His Will and its consequences, for He is the Ultimate Reality. He is independent of the proximate or material causes, for He Himself creates diem and establishes their Laws as He pleases (*Cf.* 36:82 and 40:68).

41. To those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah, after suffering oppression-(2067) We will assuredly give a goodly home in this world; but truly the reward of the Hereafter will be greater. If they only realised (this)!

2067 There is no merit in suffering exile *(hijrah)* in itself. To have any merit, it must be: (1) in the cause of Allah, and (2) after such an oppression as forces the sufferer to choose between Allah and man. When these conditions are fulfilled, the exiles are entitled to the highest honour, as having made a great sacrifice in the cause of Allah. Such were the early Muslim exiles to Abyssinia ; such were the later exiles to Madinah, before the Prophet himself left his home in Makkah and went to Madinah; and such were the exiles who went with the Prophet or followed him. At all these stages, his approval or advice was always obtained, either specifically or generally (*Cf.* 29:58).

42. (They are) those who persevere in patience, and put their trust on their Lord.

43. And before thee also the messengers We sent were but men,(2068) to whom We granted inspiration: if ye realise this not, ask of those who possess the Message.(2069)

2068 Allah's prophets were always men, not angels; and their distinction was the inspiration they received.

2069 If the Pagan Arabs, who were ignorant of religious and other history, wondered how a man from among themselves could receive inspiration and bring a Message from Allah, let them ask the Jews, who had also received Allah's Message earlier through Moses, whether Moses was a man, or an angel, or a god. They would learn that Moses was a man like themselves, but inspired by Allah. "Those who possess the Message" may also mean any men of Wisdom, who were qualified to have an opinion in such matters (*Cf.* 21:7 and 38:1).

44. (We sent them) with Clear Signs and Scriptures(2070); and We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that thou mayest explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought.

2070 As the People of the Book had received "Clear Signs" and inspired Books before, so also Allah's Message came to the Prophet Muhammad through the Qur'an, which superseded the earlier revelations, already corrupted in the hands of their followers. (R).

45. Do then those who devise evil (plots) feel secure that Allah will not cause the earth to swallow them up, or that the Wrath will not seize them from directions they little perceive?-(2071)

2071 *Cf.* 16:26. The wicked plot against Prophets of Allah in secret, forgetting that every hidden thought of theirs is known to Allah, and that for every thought and action of theirs they will have to account to Allah. And Allah's punishment can seize them in various ways. Four are enumerated here. (1) They may be swallowed up in the earth like Qarun, whose story is told in 28:76-82. He was swallowed up in the earth while he was arrogantly exulting on the score of his wealth. (2) It may be that, like Haman, the prime minister of Pharaoh, they are plotting against Allah, when they are themselves overwhelmed by some dreadful calamity: 40:36-38; 29:39-40. The case of Pharaoh is also in point. He was drowned while he was arrogantly hoping to frustrate Allah's plans for Israel : 10:90-92- For (3) and (4) see the next two notes. (R).

46. Or that He may not call them to account in the midst of their goings(2072) to and fro, without a chance of their frustrating Him?-

2072 (3) Or the punishment may come to people away from their homes and humble them in their pride. It so happened to Abu J ahl, who came exulting in his pride to the Battle of Badr (A.H.2). His army was three times the size of the Muslim army from Madinah. But it suffered a crushing defeat, and he himself was ignominiously slain.

47. Or that He may not call them to account by a process of slow wastage -(2073) for thy Lord is indeed full of kindness and mercy.

2073 (4) Or, as often happens, the punishment comes slowly and imperceptibly, the power of the enemies of Allah being wasted gradually, until it is extinguished. This happened to the Makkans during the eight years of the Prophet's exile. The conquest of Makkah was bloodless, because the power of the enemy had gradually vanished. The Prophet was thus able to show the unexampled generosity and clemency which he showed on that occasion, for two of Allah's attributes are expressed in the titles "Full of kindness" *(Ra'uf)* and "Full of mercy" *(Rahim)*.

48. Do they not look at Allah.s creation, (even) among (inanimate) things-(2074) How their (very) shadows turn round, from the right and the left, prostrating themselves to Allah, and that in the humblest manner?

2074 I take "things" here to be inanimate things, for the next verse speaks of living "moving creatures" and angels. By a metaphor even such inanimate things are spoken of as recognising Allah and humbly worshipping Him. Even their shadows turn around from right and left according to the light from above, and, they humbly prostrate themselves on the ground to celebrate the praises of Allah. The "shadows" suggest how all things in this life are mere shadows of the true Reality in heaven; and they should turn and move in accordance with the divine light, as the shadows of trees and buildings move in one direction or another, and lengthen or shorten according to the light from heaven.

49. And to Allah doth obeisance all that is in the heavens and on earth, whether moving (living) creatures(2075) or the angels: for none are arrogant (before their Lord).

2075 *Moving creatures, i.e.,* living creatures. "All that is in the heaven or earth," includes every created thing. And created things are mentioned in three classes: inanimate things, ordinary living things, and angels. Even the highest angels are not arrogant: they bow down and serve their Lord, and so does all Creation.

50. They all revere their Lord,(2076) high above them, and they do all that they are commanded.

2076 Allah is so high above the highest of His creatures, that they all look up to him in awe and reverence. And they joyfully do their duty in serving him. This is the meaning of the "fear of the Lord."

51. Allah has said: "Take not (for worship) two gods:(2077) for He is just One Allah. then fear Me (and Me alone)."

2077 The ancient Persians believed in two powers in the Universe, one good and the other evil. The Pagan Arabs also had pairs of deities: *e.g., Jibt* (Sorcery) and *Taghut* (Evil), referred to in 4:51, n. 573, or the idols on Safa and Marwah referred to in n. 160 to 2:158: their names were Isaf and Nayla.

52. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and on earth, and to Him is duty due always: then will ye fear other(2078) than Allah.

2078 The Pagans might have a glimmering of the One True God, but they had also a haunting fear of malevolent Powers of Evil. They are told that such fears are groundless. Evil has no power over those who trust in Allah: 15:42. The only fear

they should have is that of the Wrath of Allah. To the righteous all good things come from Allah, and they have no fear in their hearts.

53. And ye have no good thing but is from Allah. and moreover, when ye are touched by distress, unto Him ye cry with groans;(2079)

2079 Which shows that the natural tendency of man is to seek Allah, the only Power which can truly relieve distress.

54. Yet, when He removes the distress from you, behold! some of you turn to other gods to join with their Lord-

55. (As if) to show their ingratitude for the favours we have bestowed on them! then enjoy (your brief day): but soon will ye know (your folly)!

56. And they (even) assign, to things they do not know,(2080) a portion out of that which We have bestowed for their sustenance!(2081) By Allah, ye shall certainly be called to account for your false inventions.

2080 Idols and fictitious gods are certainly things of which they have no knowledge, idols being lifeless things of whose life or doings no knowledge is possible, and fictitious gods being but figments of their imagination.

2081 *Cf.* 6:136-140, 142-144, and 5:103. The Pagans, in assigning and dedicating some of their children, or some of their cattle, or some of the produce of their fields, to their false gods as shares with the true Supreme Allah, made themselves doubly ridiculous; first, because every good thing that they valued was given to them by Allah, and how could they patronisingly assign to Him a share of His own gifts?-and secondly, because they brought in other gods as shares, who had no existence whatever! Besides, the cattle and produce were given for their physical sustenance and the children for their social and spiritual sustenance, and how can they, poor creatures, give sustenance to Allah?

57. And they assign daughters(2082) for Allah. - Glory be to Him! - and for themselves (sons,- the issue) they desire!

2082 Some of the Pagan Arabs called angels 'the daughters of Allah'. In their own life they hated to have daughters, as explained in the next two verses. They practised female infanticide. In their state of perpetual war, sons were a source of strength to them; daughters only made them subject to humiliating raids!

58. When news is brought to one of them, of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief!

59. With shame does he hide himself from his people, because of the bad news he has had! Shall he retain it(2083) on (sufferance and) contempt, or bury it in the dust?(2084) Ah! what an evil (choice) they decide on?(2085)

2083 "It," in this and the following clause, refers grammatically to the "news" *(ma bushshira bihi).* In meaning it refers to the "female child"-by the figure of speech known as metonymy.

2084 *Cf.* 81:8-9. The practice of female infanticide is condemned in scathing terms. Female children used to be buried alive by the Pagan Arabs.

2085 It was an evil choice to decide on. Either alternative-to keep the poor girl as a thing of sufferance and contempt, bringing disgrace on the family, or to get rid of it by burying it alive-was cruel and indefensible. *(Cf.* 17:40 and 43:16-17).

60. To those who believe not in the Hereafter, applies the similitude of evil: to Allah applies the highest(2086) similitude: for He is the Exalted in Power, full of Wisdom.

2086 The word *mathal* ordinarily denotes a similitude, but in the context of the present verse, especially with reference to Allah, it signifies His sublime attributes rather than a similitude. *Cf.* 30:27. (Eds.).

61. If Allah were to punish men for their wrong-doing, He would not leave, on the (earth), a single living creature: but He gives them respite for a stated Term: When their Term expires, they would not be able to delay (the punishment) for a single hour, just as they would not be able to anticipate it (for a single hour).(2087)

2087 Allah's decree works without fail. If He were to punish for every wrong or shortcoming, not a single living creature on earth would escape punishment. But in His infinite mercy and forgiveness, He gives respite: He provides time for repentance. If the repentance is forthcoming, Allah's Mercy is forthcoming without fail. If not, the punishment comes inevitably on the expiration of the Term. The sinner cannot anticipate it by an insolent challenge, nor can he delay it when the time arrives. Let him not think that the respite given him may mean that he can do what he likes, and that he can escape scot-free from the consequences (*Cf.* 35:45).

62. They attribute to Allah what they hate (for themselves),(2088) and their tongues assert the falsehood that all good(2089) things are for themselves: without doubt for them is the Fire, and they will be the first to be hastened on into it!

2088 See above, 16:57-58 and notes.

2089 The philosophy of Pleasure (Hedonism) assumes that worldly enjoyment is good in itself and that there is nothing beyond. But it can be shown, even on its own ground, that every act has its inevitable consequences. No good can spring out of evil. For falsehood and wrong the agony of the Fire is waiting, and the boastful votaries of falsehood will be the first to fall into it *(Cf.* 37:149 and 52:39).

63. By Allah, We (also) sent (Our messengers) to Peoples before thee; but Satan made, (to the wicked), their own acts seem alluring: He is also their patron today,(2090) but they shall have a most grievous penalty.

2090 In all ages and among all Peoples Allah sent His Messengers to teach the Truth and point the way to righteousness. But the allurements of Evil seemed always attractive, and many men preferred their own ways and the ways of their ancestors to the more difficult path of rectitude. This happened again in the time of Al Mustafa, and will always happen as long as men succumb to Evil.

64. And We sent down the Book to thee for the express purpose, that thou shouldst make clear to them those things in which(2091) they differ, and that it should be a guide and a mercy to those who believe.

2091 But the path of duty before Allah's Messenger is clear. He is sent with the Revelation (the Qur'an) for three express purposes: (1) that he should bring about unity among the jarring sects, for the Gospel of Unit)', while preaching the One True God, leads also to the unity of mankind; (2) that the revelation should be a guide to right conduct; and (3) that it should show the path of repentance and salvation, and thus be the highest mercy to erring sinners.

65. And Allah sends down rain from the skies, and gives therewith life to the earth after its death: verily in this is a Sign for those who listen.(2092)

2092 When the earth with all its vegetation is well-nigh dead, parched and shrivelled up, a vivifying shower of rain from above gives it new life. This natural phenomenon is a sign of Allah's infinite power, especially of His power to resurrect the dead, and thereafter muster them for Judgment. (Eds.).

66. And verily in cattle (too) will ye find an instructive sign.(2093) From what is within their bodies,(2094) between excretions and blood,(2095) We produce, for your drink, milk, pure and agreeable to those who drink it.

2093 The spiritual sustenance which Allah gives is typified by the wonderful ways of sustenance in the physical world, which figure forth Allah's providence and loving care for His creation. And the wonderful transformation in the physical world, which all tend to the benefit of man, are also signs of His supreme wisdom. In the previous verse rain was mentioned, which gives new life to dead nature. In

this and the following two verses our attention is drawn to milk, the products of the date and the vine, and honey *(Cf.* 36:11-73).

2094 *Their,* in the Arabic, it is "its", in the singular number, for two reasons: (1) catde is the generic plural, and may be treated as a singular noun; (2) the instructive sign is in cattle collectively, but the milk

is the product of each single individual.

2095 Milk is a secretion in the female body, like other secretions, but more specialised. Is it not wonderful that the same food, eaten by males and females, produces in the latter, when they have young, the wholesome and complete food, known as milk? Then, when cattle are tamed and specially bred for milk, the supply of milk is vastly greater than is necessary for their young and lasts for a longer time than during the period they give suck to their young. And it is a wholesome and agreeable diet for man. It is pure, as typified by its whiteness. Yet it is a secretion like other secretions, between the excretions which the body rejects as worthless and the precious blood-stream which circulates within the body and is the symbol of life itself to the animal which produces it.

67. And from the fruit of the date-palm and the vine, ye get out(2096) drink and wholesome food: behold, in this also is a sign for those who are wise.

2096 There are drinks and wholesome foods that can be got out of the date palm and the vine: *e.g.,* non-alcoholic drinks from the date and the grape, vinegar, date sugar, grape sugar, and dates and grapes themselves for eating. If *sakar* is taken in the sense of fermented wine, it would refer to the time before intoxicants were prohibited, for this is a Makkan Surah and the prohibition came in MadTnah. In such a case it would imply a subtle disapproval of the use of intoxicants and mark the first of a series of steps that in time culminated in total prohibition. (R).

68. And thy Lord taught the Bee(2097) to build its cells in hills, on trees, and in (men´s) habitations;

2097 *Awha: wahy* ordinarily means inspiration, the Message put into the mind or heart by Allah. Here the Bee's instinct is referred to Allah's teaching, which it undoubtedly is. In 99:5, it is applied to the earth: We shall discuss the precise meaning when we come to that passage. The honeycomb, itself, with its hexagonal cells, geometrically perfect, is a wonderful structure, and is well called *buyut,* homes. And the way the bee finds out inaccessible places, in the hills, in the trees, and even among the habitations of men, is one of the marvels of nature, *i.e.,* of Allah's working in His Creation.

69. Then to eat of all the produce (of the earth),(2098) and find with skill the spacious(2099) paths of its Lord: there issues from within their bodies a drink of varying colours, wherein is healing for men: verily in this is a Sign for those who give thought.

2098 The bee assimilates the juice of various kinds of flowers and fruit, and forms within its body the honey which it stores in its cells of wax. The different kinds of food from which it makes its honey give different colours to the honey, *e.g.,* it is dark-brown, light-brown, yellow, white, and so on. The taste and flavour also varies, as in the case of heather honey, the honey formed from scented flowers, and so on. As food it is sweet and wholesome, and it is used in medicine. Note that while the instinctive individual acts are described in the singular number, the produce *of "their bodies"* is described in the plural, as the result of their collective effort.

2099 *Dhululan:* two meanings are possible: (1) ways easy and spacious, referring to the unerring way in which bees find their way from long distances to their combs; and (2) the idea of humility and obedience in them. From both we can derive a metaphorical and spiritual meaning.

70. It is Allah who creates you and takes your souls at death; and of you there are some who are sent back to a feeble age, so that(2100) they know nothing after having known (much): for Allah is All-Knowing,(2101) All-Powerful.

2100 Besides the mystery and beauty of the many processes going on in the working of Allah's Creation, there is the wonderful life of man himself on this earth: how he is created as a child; how he grows in intelligence and knowledge; and how his soul is taken back and his body suffers dissolution. In some cases he lives so long that he falls into a feeble old age like a second childhood: he forgets what he learnt and seems almost to go back in Time. Is not all this wonderful, and evidence of the Knowledge and Power of Allah?

2101 *(Cf.* 22:5). Our attention having been called to the remarkable transformations in life and nature, by which the Knowledge and Power of Allah work out His beneficent Plan for His creatures, we are reminded that man at best is but a feeble creature, but for the grace of Allah. We then pass on in the next Section to the differences in the gifts which men themselves enjoy, distinguishing them into so many categories. How much greater is the difference between the created things and their Creator?

71. Allah has bestowed His gifts of sustenance more freely on some of you than on others: those more favoured are not going to throw back their gifts to those whom their right hands possess, so as to be equal in that respect. Will they then deny the favours of Allah?(2102)

2102 Even in the little differences in gifts, which men enjoy from Allah, men with superior gifts are not going to abandon them so as to be equal with men of inferior gifts, whom, perhaps, they hold in subjection. They will never deny their own superiority. How then (as the argument is pursued in the two following verses), can they ignore the immense difference between the Creator and created things, and make the latter, in their thoughts, partners with Allah?

72. And Allah has made for you mates (and companions) of your own nature,(2103) and made for you, out of them, sons and daughters and grandchildren,(2104) and provided for you sustenance of the best: will they then believe in vain things, and be ungrateful for Allah.s favours?-

2103 *Of your nature:* or of yourselves. *Cf.* 4:1 and n. 504. Self, or Personality, or Soul, all imply a bundle of attributes, capacities, predilections, and dispositions, which we may sum up in the word *Nafs,* or nature. Roman was made to be (I) a mate or companion for man; (2) except for sex, of the same nature as man, and therefore with the same moral and religious rights and duties; and (3) she is not to be considered a source of all evil or sin, as the Christian monks characterised her but rather as a blessing, one of the favours, *(Ni'mah)* of Allah,

2104 *Hajadah:* collective plural, daughters, grandchildren, and descendants. The root *hafada* also implies obedient service and ministration. Just as the sons (first mentioned) should be a source of strength, so daughters and grandchildren should serve and contribute to the happiness of fathers and grandparents, and are to be looked upon as further blessings.

73. And worship others than Allah,- such as have no power of providing them, for sustenance,(2105) with anything in heavens or earth, and cannot possibly have such power?

2105 "Sustenance" *(rizq)* in all this passage (16:65-74), as elsewhere, implies all that is necessary for man's life and growth, physical, mental and spiritual. Milk, fruit, and honey are examples of physical gifts, with a metaphorical reference to mental and moral health; family life is an example of moral and social and (ultimately) spiritual opportunities in the life of man; and in 16:65 is an example of rain in the physical world as a type of Allah's revelation in the spiritual world.

74. Invent not similitudes(2106) for Allah. for Allah knoweth, and ye know not.

2106 *Cf.* 16:60 above, and n. 2086. One instance of false similitudes is where Pagans say their gods are mere types or symbols, or where men pray to men as intercessors.

75. Allah sets forth the Parable (of two men: one) a slave under the dominion of another;(2107) He has no power of any sort; and (the other) a man on whom We have bestowed goodly favours from Ourselves, and he spends thereof (freely), privately and publicly: are the two equal? (By no means;) praise be to Allah. But most of them understand not.

2107 The first parable is of two men, one of whom is a slave completely under the dominion of another, with no powers of any sort, and another a free man, who is gifted in every way, and is most generous in bestowing out of his opulent wealth (material as well as intangible), privately and publicly, without let or hindrance; for he is his own master and owes no account to anyone. The first is like the imaginary gods which men set up—whether powers of nature, which have no independent existence but are manifestations of Allah, or deified heroes or men, who can do nothing of their own authority but are subject to the Will and Power

of Allah; the second describes in a faint way the position of Allah, the Self-Subsistent, to Whom belongs the dominion of all that is in heaven and earth, and Who bestows freely of His gifts on all His creatures.

76. Allah sets forth (another) Parable of two men: one of them dumb, with no power of any sort; a wearisome burden is he to his master; whichever way be directs him, he brings no good:(2108) is such a man equal with one who commands Justice, and is on a Straight Way?(2109)

2108 In the second Parable, one man is dumb; he can explain nothing, and he can certainly do nothing; he is only a wearisome burden to his master, no matter what his master asks him to do; or perhaps he is really harmful instead of bringing any good: such are idols (literal and metaphorical) when taken as false gods. The other man is in a position to command, and he commands what is just and righteous; not only his commands but his doings also are on the path of righteousness. Such are the qualities of Allah.

2109 The gist of the argument is that those who deviate from the worship of Allah commit twofold treason: (l) They do not recognise the immense difference between the Creator and created things, although, in their own little selfish lives, they are tenacious of any little differences there may be between themselves and other fellow-creatures not so gifted. (2) They are guilty of gross ingratitude in forgetting that the source of goodness and power is Allah, to Whom alone they owe all the gifts they enjoy in life.

77. To Allah belongeth the Mystery(2110) of the heavens and the earth. And the Decision of the Hour(2111) (of Judgment) is as the twingkling of an eye, or even quicker: for Allah hath power over all things.

2110 The key to all things—not only those which we see and understand, but those which we do not see or of which have no idea—is with Allah, Whose knowledge and power are supreme.

2111 Lures of this world and its fleeting pleasures often make man forget that the life of the hereafter is an imminent reality. Many of those who claim to believe in the life to come act and behave as if it belonged to a distant future, and had no relevance to their present activities and mode of living. The Qur'an repeatedly reminds man that the Hour of Reckoning is not a distant possibility, but very close to man, and could come to pass any moment. The wisest course for man, therefore, is to be always alert and watchful and steer clear of all forms of sin and impiety, for when the Promised Hour comes it will come all of a sudden and without any prior notice. See also 10:45; 30:55, 45:32. (Eds.)

78. It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections:(2112) that ye may give thanks (to Allah..

2112 Literally, 'hearts,' are considered the centres of the affections, and in Arabic idiom, of intelligence also. We should therefore give thanks to Allah, not to imaginary deities or powers or forces.

79. Do they not look at the birds, held poised in the midst of (the air and) the sky? Nothing holds them up but (the power(2113) of) Allah. Verily in this are signs for those who believe.

2113 All the wonderful things in creation are due to the artistry, power, and wisdom of Allah. Such as the flight of birds in midair. So also are the inventions and discoveries, due to man's intelligence, in the next verse; for man's intelligence is a gift direct from Allah.

80. It is Allah Who made your habitations homes of rest and quiet(2114) for you; and made for you, out of the skins of animals, (tents for) dwellings, which ye find so light (and handy) when ye travel and when ye stop (in your travels);(2115) and out of their wool, and their soft fibres(2116) (between wool and hair), and their hair, rich stuff and articles of convenience (to serve you) for a time.(2117)

2114 Man's social, intellectual, and spiritual gifts make, of his permanent dwellings, homes of rest and quiet, of refinement and the purer affections, which are the types, in this earthly life, of the highest spiritual Good, the Love of Allah. The pure home thus becomes the type of the highest spiritual destiny of man. And these capacities in man are the gifts of Allah.

2115 When man travels, he wants temporary dwellings, tents, which he can make of the skins of animals, or of the fabrics of vegetable fibres, similar to the skins of animals. These tents are easy to carry when moving, and easy to pitch during halts.

2116 *Suf,* wool, is what we get from sheep. *Sha'r,* hair, is what we get from goats or similar animals, for weaving into fabrics. *Wabar is* the soft camel's hair of which, also, fabrics are woven: they may be considered intermediate between the other two: by extension and analogy the term may be applied to furs and such things, by way of illustration.

2117 All such articles of refined luxury, and useful articles of comfort and convenience only last for awhile, but they must be considered Allah's gifts *(Cf. n.* 3991).

81. It is Allah Who made out of the things He created, some things to give you shade;(2118) of the hills He made some for your shelter; He made you garments to protect you from heat, and coats of mail to protect you from your (mutual) violence.(2119) Thus does He complete His favours on you, that ye may bow to His Will(2120) (in Islam).

2118 For example, trees, gardens, the roofs of houses; also from another point of view, the fact that the sun's rays at various times and in various parts of the earth, come obliquely, thus causing shadows along with sunshine. In the hills there are caves and grottoes.

2119 Our clothes protect us from heat and cold, just as our armour protects us from the hurt which we might otherwise receive in battle.

2120 All these blessings, which have both a physical and (by promoting the good of man) a spiritual purpose, should teach us to rally to Allah and tune our will with His Universal Will, which is another name for Islam.

82. But if they turn away, thy duty is only to preach the clear Message.

83. They recognise the favours(2121) of Allah. then they deny them; and most of them are (creatures) ungrateful.

2121 'Arafa distinguished from *'alima'm* implying a specific discernment (or recognition) of various qualities and uses. All mankind recognises the value of the blessings they enjoy, but in forgetting or disobeying their Author, the wicked show gross ingratitude: for in practice they deny their obligation to Him for those blessing.

84. One Day We shall raise from all Peoples a Witness:(2122) then will no excuse be accepted from Unbelievers, nor will they receive any favours.(2122-A)

2122 To each People is sent Allah's Messenger or Teacher, to point out the right way. There may be one, or there may be many. Such a Messenger *(Rasu1)* will be a witness that Allah's Truth was preached to all peoples in express terms, in addition to the Signs of Allah everywhere in nature. There will then be no room for excuses of any kind. Those who rejected Allah after repeated warnings cannot reasonably ask for more respite, as they had every kind of respite during their life of probation; nor can they now take refuge behind Allah's Grace, which they had repeatedly rejected.

2122-A That is, they will not be allowed to seek grace by repentance. *Cf.* 30:57, 45:35.(Eds.).

85. When the wrong-doers (actually) see the Penalty,(2123) then will it in no way be mitigated, nor will they then receive respite.

2123 When the terrible Penalty is actually on them, it is too late for repentance and for asking for Mercy. Justice must take its course.

86. When those who gave partners to Allah will see their "partners", they will say: "Our Lord! these are our ´partners,´ those whom we used to invoke(2124) besides Thee." But they will throw back their word at them (and say): "Indeed ye are liars!"

2124 The worshippers of false gods will try to shift the responsibility from their own shoulders to that of the false gods. They will suggest (though they will not have the courage for such a bare-faced lie) that they were misled by the false gods. But their lying suggestions will be contradicted and thrown back at them as explained in the next note.

87. That Day shall they (openly) show(2125) (their) submission to Allah. and all their inventions shall leave them in the lurch.

2125 Insofar as the false gods were real things, such as deified men or forces of nature, they will openly disclaim them and then (as always) show their submission to Allah. Insofar as the false gods were the inventions of the fancy of the idolaters, they will leave worshippers in the lurch, for they will be shown as non-existent

88. Those who reject Allah and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah - for them will We add Penalty to Penalty; for that they used to spread mischief.

89. One day We shall raise from all Peoples a witness against them, from amongst themselves:(2126) and We shall bring thee as a witness against these (thy people): and We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims.

2126 To the thought expressed in 16:84 above, is added another detail here. Not only will there be witnesses from Peoples, but the witnesses will be men from amongst the Peoples themselves, men of their own kith and kin, who understood them and explained Allah's Message in their own language. The Prophet Muhammad will be witness against all those who rejected the Message he brought. For those who believe in him (of all races and peoples), the Book which he brought will be an explanation, a guide, a mercy and a Gospel. (R).

90. Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition.(2127)

2127 Justice is a comprehensive term, and may include all the virtues of cold philosophy. But religion asks for something warmer and more human, the doing of good deeds even where perhaps they are not strictly demanded by justice, such as returning good for ill, or obliging those who in worldly language "have no claim" on you; and of course a *fortiori* the fulfilling of the claims of those whose claims are recognised in social life. Similarly the opposites are to be avoided: everything that is recognised as shameful, and everything that is really unjust, and any inward rebellion against Allah's Law or our own conscience in its most sensitive form.

91. Fulfil the Covenant of Allah when ye have entered into it, and break not your oaths after ye have confirmed them; indeed ye have made(2128) Allah your surety; for Allah knoweth all that ye do.

2128 The immediate reference may or may not be to the oath of fidelity to the Prophet taken at 'Aqabah fourteen months before the Hijrah and repeated a little later; see 5:7 and n. 705. But the general meaning is much wider. And this may be viewed in two aspects: (1) Every oath taken, or covenant made, is a Covenant before Allah, and should be faithfully observed. In this it approaches in meaning to 5:1. (2) In particular, every Muslim makes, by the profession of his Faith, a Covenant with Allah, and he confirms that Covenant every time he repeats that profession. He should therefore faithfully observe the duties taught to him by Islam.

92. And be not like a woman who breaks into untwisted strands the yarn which she has spun, after it has become strong.(2129) Nor(2130) take your oaths to practise deception between yourselves, lest one party should be more numerous than another:(2131) for Allah will test you by this; and on the Day of Judgment He will certainly make clear to you (the truth of) that wherein ye disagree.(2132)

2129 The Covenant which binds us in the spiritual world makes us strong, like strands of fluffy cotton spun into a strong thread. It also gives us a sense of security against much evil in this world. It costs a woman much labour and skill to spin good strong yarn. She would be foolish indeed, after she has spun such yarn, to untwist its constituent strands and break them into flimsy pieces.

2130 *Nor*. I construe *tattakhidhuna* with *la takunu in* the previous clause.

2131 Do not make your religion merely a game of making your own party numerically strong by alliance cemented by oaths, which you readily break when a more numerous party offers you its alliance. Quraysh were addicted to this vice, and in international politics at the present day, this seems to be almost a standard of national self-respect and international skill. Islam teaches nobler ethics for individuals and nations. A Covenant should be looked upon as a solemn thing, not to be entered into except with the sincerest intention of carrying it out; and it is binding even if large numbers are ranged against it.

2132 Disagreements need not necessarily cause conflict where the parties are sincere and honest and do not wish to take advantage of one another. In such cases they do not go by numbers, groupings, and alliances, but by just conduct as in the sight of Allah. Honest differences will be removed when all things are made clear in the Hereafter.

93. If Allah so willed, He could make you all one people: But He leaves straying(2133) whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases: but ye shall certainly be called to account for all your actions.

2133 *Cf.* 14:4 and n. 1875. Allah's Will and Plan, in allowing limited free will to man, is, not to force man's will, but to give all guidance, and leave alone those who reject that guidance, in case they should repent and come back into Grace. But in all cases, insofar as we are given the choice, we shall be called to account for all our actions. "Leaving to stray" does not mean that we can do what we please. Our personal responsibility remains.

94. And take not your oaths, to practise deception between yourselves,(2134) with the result that someone´s foot may slip after it was firmly planted, and ye may have to taste the evil (consequences) of having hindered (men) from the Path of Allah, and a Mighty Wrath descend on you.

2134 In 16:92, above, the motive for false and fraudulent covenants was pointed out with reprobation. Now are pointed out the consequences, *viz.,* (1) to others; if they had not been deceived, they might have walked firmly on the Path, but now they lose faith and perhaps commit like frauds for which you will be responsible; (2) to yourselves; you have not only gone wrong yourselves; but have set others on the wrong path; and deserve a double Penalty. Perhaps the "evil consequences" refer to this world, and *the* "wrath" to the Hereafter.

95. Nor sell the covenant of Allah for a miserable price:(2135) for with Allah is (a prize) far better for you, if ye only knew.

2135 Any possible gain that you can make by breaking your Covenant and thus breaking Allah's Law must necessarily be miserable; while your own benefit is far greater in obeying Allah's Will and doing right.

96. What is with you must vanish: what is with Allah will endure. And We will certainly bestow, on those who patiently persevere, their reward according to the best of their actions.(2136)

2136 What comparison can there possibly be between spiritual Good, which will endure forever, and any temporal advantage which you may snatch in this world, which will fade and vanish in no time? And then, Allah's generosity is unbounded. He rewards you, not according to your merits, but according to the very best of your actions.

97. Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life, a life(2137) that is good and pure and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.(2138)

2137 Faith, if sincere, means right conduct. When these two confirm each other, Allah's grace transforms our life. Instead of being troubled and worried, we have peace and contentment: instead of being assailed at every turn by false alarms and the assaults of evil, we enjoy calm and attain purity. The transformation is \isible in this life itself, but the "reward" in terms of the Hereafter will be far beyond our deserts.

2138 The same ending as in the previous verses deepens the overall effect of bringing home the message forcefully and beautifully. The argument is completed and rounded off. (R).

98. When thou dost read(2139) the Qur´an, seek Allah's protection from Satan the rejected one.

2139 Evil has no authority or influence on those who put their trust in Allah. It is good to express that trust in outward actions, and a formal expression of it-as in the formula, "I seek Allah's protection from Evil'-helps us. Reading or reciting the Qur'an should be understood both literally and figuratively as the symbol of the earnest desire of the soul to know and understand Allah's Will and act in accordance therewith. Man is weak at best, and he should seek strength for his will in Allah's help and protection.

99. No authority has he over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord.

100. His authority is over those only, who take him as patron and who join partners with Allah.

101. When We substitute one revelation(2140) for another,- and Allah knows best what He reveals (in stages),- they say, "Thou art but a forger": but most of them understand not.

2140 See 2:106, and n. 107. The doctrine of progressive revelation from age to age and time to time does not mean that Allah's fundamental Law changes. It is not fair to charge a Prophet of Allah with forgery because the Message, as revealed to him, is in a different form from that revealed before, when the core of the Truth is the same, for it comes from Allah.

102. Say, the Holy Spirit(2141) has brought the revelation from thy Lord in Truth, in order to strengthen those who believe,(2142) and as a Guide and Glad Tidings to Muslims.

2141 The title of the Angel Gabriel, through whom the revelation came down.

2142 The People of the Book, if they had true faith, were themselves strengthened in their faith and cleared of their doubts and difficulties by the revelations brought by Al Mustafa: and all whether People of the Book or not-who came within the fold of Islam, found the Qur'an a Guide and a Gospel, *i.e.,* a substitute for the Mosaic Law and for the Christian Gospel, which had both been corrupted.

103. We know indeed that they say, "It is a man that teaches him." The tongue of him they wickedly point to is notably foreign, while this is Arabic, pure and clear.(2143)

2143 The wicked attribute to Prophets of Allah just such motives and springs of action as they themselves would be guilty of in such circumstances. The Pagans and those who were hostile to the revelation of Allah in Islam could not and cannot understand how such wonderful words could flow from the tongue of the Prophet. They must postulate some human teacher. Unfortunately for their postulate, any possible human teacher they could think of would be poor in Arabic speech if he had all the knowledge that the Qur'an reveals of previous revelations. Apart from that, even the most eloquent Arab could not, and cannot, produce anything of the eloquence, width, and depth of Quranic teaching, as is evident from every verse of the Book *(Cf. 41:44).* (R).

104. Those who believe not in the Signs of Allah,- Allah will not guide them, and theirs will be a grievous Penalty.

105. It is those who believe not in the Signs of Allah, that forge falsehood: it is they who lie!(2144)

2144 It is clearly those who raise the cry of forgery that are guilty of falsehood, as there is not the least basis or even plausibility in their suggestion.

106. Any one who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters Unbelief,-(2145) except under compulsion, his heart remaining firm in Faith - but such as open their breast to Unbelief, on them is Wrath from Allah, and theirs will be a dreadful Penalty.

2145 The exception refers to a case like that of 'Ammar, whose father Yassir and mother Sumayya, were subjected to unspeakable tortures for their belief in Islam, but never recanted. 'Ammar, suffering under tortures himself and his mind acted on by the sufferings of his parents, uttered a word construed as recantation, though his heart never wavered and he came back at once to the Prophet, who consoled him for his pain and confirmed his faith.(R).

107. This because they love the life of this world better than the Hereafter: and Allah will not guide those who reject Faith.

108. Those are they whose hearts, ears, and eyes Allah has sealed up,(2146) and they take no heed.

2146 *Cf.* 2:7. On account of their iniquities and their want of Faith their hearts and their senses became impervious to Allah's grace, and they run headlong to perdition, (see also 6:46 and 30:59).

109. Without doubt, in the Hereafter they will perish.

110. But verily thy Lord,- to those who leave their homes after trials and persecutions,-(2147) and who thereafter strive and fight for the faith and patiently persevere,- Thy Lord, after all this is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

2147 I take this verse to refer to such men as were originally with the Pagans but afterwards joined Islam, suffered hardships and exile, and fought and struggled in the Cause, with patience and constancy. Their past would be blotted out and forgiven. Men like Khalid ibn al walld were numbered with the foremost heroes of Islam. In that case this verse would be a Madinah verse, though the Surah as a whole is Makkan. Perhaps it would be better to read, with some Commentators, *fatanu* in the active voice rather than *futinu* in the passive voice, and translate "after inflicting trials and persecutions (on Muslims)-" Notice the parallelism in construction between this verse and verse 119 below.

111. One Day every soul will come up struggling(2148) for itself, and every soul will be recompensed (fully) for all its actions, and none will be unjustly dealt with.

2148 When the Reckoning comes, each soul will stand on its own personal responsibility. No one else can help it. Full justice will be done, and all the seeming inequalities of this world will he redressed.

112. Allah sets forth a Parable: a city enjoying security(2149) and quiet, abundantly supplied with sustenance from every place: Yet was it ungrateful for the favours of Allah. so Allah made it taste of hunger and terror (in extremes) (closing in on it) like a garment(2150) (from every side), because of the (evil) which (its people) wrought.

2149 The reference may be to any of the cities or populations in ancient or modern times, which were favoured with security and other blessings from Allah, but which rebelled from Allah's Law and tasted the inevitable penalty, even in the midst of their iniquities. Some commentators see here a reference to the city of Makkah under Pagan control. See next note.

2150 There is a double metaphor: (1) the *tasting* of hunger and terror after the abundant supplies and the full security which it had enjoyed; and (2) the complete *enfolding* of the city as with a *garment,* by these two scourges, hunger and a state of subjective alarm. If the reference is to Makkah shortly before its fall to the Muslims, the "hunger" was the seven years' severe famine which afflicted it, and the alarm was the constant fear in the minds of the Pagans that their day was done. Peace and prosperity were restored after the re-entry of the Prophet.

113. And there came to them a Messenger from among themselves, but they falsely rejected him; so the Wrath seized them even in the midst of their iniquities.

114. So eat of the sustenance which Allah has provided for you, lawful and good; and be grateful for the favours(2151) of Allah, if it is He Whom ye serve.

2151 Ingratitude for Allah's sustenance (in the literal and figurative senses) may be shown in various ways: e.g., (1) by forgetting or refusing to acknowledge the true

source of the bounty, *viz.,* Allah, (2) by misusing or misapplying the bounty, as by committing excesses in things lawful, or refusing to share them with others of Allah's creatures when the need arises, or (3) by falsely ascribing to Allah any prohibition we may set up for ourselves for special reasons or because of our special idiosyncrasies.

115. He has only forbidden you(2152) dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and any (food) over which the name of other than Allah has been invoked. But if one is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits,- then Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

2152 *Cf.* 2:173 and notes, 5:3-5 and 6:121 and 138-146.

116. But say not - for any false thing(2153) that your tongues may put forth,- "This is lawful, and this is forbidden," so as to ascribe false things to Allah. For those who ascribe false things to Allah, will never prosper.

2153 Men are apt to create taboos for themselves, out of superstition, and often for selfish ends, and enforce them in the name of religion. Nothing can be more reprehensible.

117. (In such falsehood) is but a paltry profit; but they will have a most grievous Penalty.

118. To the Jews We prohibited such things as We have mentioned to thee before:(2154) We did them no wrong, but they were used to doing wrong to themselves.

2154 See 6:146 and nn. 970-971. The further prohibitions to them were a punishment for their hardness of hearts, and not a favour.

119. But verily thy Lord,- to those who do wrong in ignorance, but who thereafter repent and make amends,- thy Lord, after all this, is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.(2155)

2155 See above, 16:110 and n. 2147. The parallelism in construction confirms the suggestion of the alternative reading which is made in that note. The similarity of expression also rounds off the argument, as by a refrain in poetry. What follows now in this Surah is an exhortation to right conduct.

120. Abraham was indeed a model,(2156) devoutly obedient to Allah, (and) true in Faith, and he joined not gods with Allah.(2157)

2156 *Ummah:* a model, pattern, example for imitation: but the idea that he was an Ummah in himself, standing alone against his world, should not be lost sight of. See next note.

2157 The Gospel of Unity has been the cornerstone of spiritual Truth for all time. In this respect Abraham is the model and fountainhead for the world of western Asia and its spiritual descendants all over the world. Abraham was among a people (the Chaldeans) who worshipped stars and had forsaken the Gospel of Unity. He was among them but not of them. He suffered persecution, and left his home and his people, and settled in the land of Canaan .

121. He showed his gratitude for the favours of Allah, who chose him, and guided him to a Straight Way.

122. And We gave him Good in this world, and he will be, in the Hereafter, in the ranks of the Righteous.(2158)

2158 *Cf.* 2:130.

123. So We have taught thee the inspired (Message), "Follow the ways of Abraham the True in Faith, and he joined not gods with Allah."

124. The Sabbath was only made(2159) (Strict) for those who disagreed (as to its observance); But Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment, as to their differences.(2160)

2159 If Abraham's Way was the right way, the Jews were ready with the taunt, "Why don't you then observe the Sabbath?" The answer is twofold. (1) The Sabbath has nothing to do with Abraham. It was instituted with the Law of Moses because of Israel 's hardness of heart (2:74); for they constantly disputed with their Prophet Moses (2:108), and there were constantly among diem afterwards men who broke the Sabbath (2:65, and n. 79). (2) Which was the true Sabbath Day? The Jews observe Saturday. The Christians, who include the Old Testament in their inspired Scripture, observe Sunday, and a sect among them (the Seventh Day Adventists) disagree, and observe Saturday. So there is disagreement among the People of the Book. Let them dispute among themselves. Their dispute will not be settled till the Day of Judgment. Meanwhile, Muslims are emancipated from such stringent restriction. For them there is certainly the Day of United Prayer on Friday, but it is in no sense like the Jewish or the Scotch Sabbath!

2160 *Cf.* 2:113.

125. Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious:(2161) for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.(2162)

2161 In this wonderful passage are laid down principles of religious teaching, which are good for all time. But where are the Teachers with such qualifications? We must invite all to the Way of Allah, and expound His Universal Will; we must do it with wisdom and discretion, meeting people on their own ground and convincing them with illustrations from their own knowledge and experience, which may be very narrow, or very wide. Our preaching must be, not dogmatic, not self-regarding, not offensive, but gentle, considerate, and such as would attract their attention. Our manner and our arguments should not be acrimonious, but modelled on the most courteous and the most gracious example, so that the hearer may say to himself, "This man is not dealing merely with dialectics; he is not trying to get a rise out of me; he is sincerely expounding the faith that is in him, and his motive is the love of man and the love of Allah."

2162 It may be that the Preacher sometimes says to himself, "What is the use of teaching these people? They have made up their minds, or they are obstinate, or they are only trying to catch me out." Let him not yield to such a thought. Who knows how the seed of the Word of Allah may germinate in people's minds? It is not for man to look for results. Man's inner thoughts are known best to Allah.

126. And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out: But if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course)(2163) for those who are patient.

2163 In the context this passage refers to controversies and discussions, but the words are wide enough to cover all human struggles, disputes, and fights. In strictest equity you are not entitled to give a worse blow than is given to you. But those who have reached a higher spiritual standard do not even do that. They restrain themselves, and are patient. Lest you should think that such patience only gives an advantage to the adversary, you are told that the contrary is the case: the advantage is with the patient, the self-possessed, those who do not lose their temper or forget their own principles of conduct.

127. And do thou be patient,(2164) for thy patience is but from Allah. nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots.

2164 In the previous verse are laid down the principles of conduct in controversy for all Muslims: 'if you catch them out, you are not entitled to strike a heavier blow than you received, but it is better to restrain yourself and be patient.' There patience was *recommended.* In this verse a command is directly addressed to the Prophet, 'Do thou be patient.' It is a *command:* his standard as the Great Teacher is much higher: and he carried it out in his life. His patience and self-restraint were under circumstances of extraordinary provocation. In his human wisdom it may sometimes have seemed questionable whether forbearance and self-restraint might not be human weakness: he had to defend his people as well as himself against the enemy's persecutions. He is told here that he need not entertain any such fears. Patience (with constancy) in those circumstances was in accordance with Allah's own command. Nor was he to grieve if they rejected Allah's Message: the Prophet had done his duty when he boldly and openly proclaimed it. Nor was his heart to be troubled if they hatched secret plots against himself and his people. Allah would protect them.

128. For Allah is with those(2165) who restrain themselves, and those who do good.

2165 And the Surah ends with the highest consolation which the righteous can receive: the assurance that Allah is with them. A double qualification is indicated for so high an honor-(l) that they should not yield to human passion or anger or impatience, and (2) that they should go on with constancy doing good all around them. To attain the Presence of Allah in the sense of "I am with you" is the culmination of the righteous man's aspiration, *(Cf.* 27:70).



17. Al Isra' (The Night Journey) or Bani Isra'il (The Children of Israel)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Glory to ((Allah)) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night(2166) from the Sacred Mosque(2167) to the Farthest Mosque,(2168) whose precincts We did bless,- in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things).(2169)

2166 The reference is to the *Mi'raj* for which see the Introduction to this Surah.

2167 *Masjid* is a place of prayer: here it refers to the Ka'bah at Makkah. It had not yet been cleared of its idols and rededicated exclusively to the One True God. It was symbolical of the new Message which was being given to mankind.

2168 *The Farthest Mosque must* refer to the site of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem on the hill of Moriah, at or near which stands the Dome of the Rock. This and the Mosque known as the Farthest Mosque *(al Masjid al Aqsa)* were completed by the Amir 'Abd al Malik in A.H. 68. *Farthest,* because it was the place of worship farthest west which was known to the Arabs in the time of the Prophet: it was a sacred place to both Jews and Christians, but the Christians then had the upper hand, as it was included in the Byzantine (Roman) Empire, which maintained a Patriarch at Jerusalem. The chief dates in connection with the Temple are: it was finished by Solomon about B.C. 1004; destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar about 586 B.C.; rebuilt under Ezra and Nehemiah about 515 B.C.; turned into a heathen idol-temple by one of Alexander's successors, Antiochus Epiphanes, 167 B.C.; restored by Herod, B.C. 17 to A.C. 29; and completely razed to the ground by the Emperor Titus in A.C. 70. These ups and downs are among the greater Signs in religious history.

2169 Allah's knowledge comprehends all things, without any curtain of Time or any separation of Space. He can therefore see and hear all things, and the Mi'raj; was a reflection of this knowledge without Time or Space.

In this and the subsequent verses, the reference to Allah is generally in the first person and plural. But in the first and the last clause of this verse it is in the third person singular: "Glory to Allah, Who did take *His* Servant. . .", "He is the One . .". In each of these two instances, the clause expresses the point of view of Allah's creatures, who glorify Him, and whose hearing and seeing are ordinarily so limited that they can do nothing but glorify Him when one of His creatures is raised up to hear and see the Mysteries. It is *they* who glorify Him. (R).

2. We gave Moses the Book,(2170) and made it a Guide to the Children of Israel, (commanding): "Take not other than Me(2171) as Disposer of (your) affairs."

2170 *The Book:* the revelation that was given to Moses. It was there clearly laid down that those who followed Moses must consider Allah as all-in-all. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.. . ; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God . . . ;" etc. (Exod. 20:3-5). These are the words of the English Bible. As a matter of fact the spirit of Mosaic teaching went further. It referred all things to the Providence of Allah: Allah is the Disposer of all affairs, and we are to look to none but Him. This is Islam, and the *Mi'raj* showed that it was the teaching of Allah from the most ancient times, and yet it was violated by the very people who claimed to be its custodians.

2171 Note the transition from "We" in the first clause to "Me" in the second clause. The first clause refers to the majesty of Allah as the Heavenly King: the second clause refers to His personal interest in all our affairs.

3. O ye that are sprung from those whom We carried (in the Ark) with Noah!(2172) Verily he was a devotee most grateful.

2172 After the Deluge of the time of Noah the only descendants of Noah were those who were saved in the Ark with him. They had special reason to celebrate the praise of Allah. But they relapsed into idolatry, sin, and abomination. They are reminded of the true and sincere devotion of Noah himself, as contrasted with the unworthiness of Noah's descendants, especially the Children of Israel.

4. And We gave (Clear) Warning to the Children of Israel(2173) in the Book, that twice(2174) would they do mischief on the earth and be elated with mighty arrogance (and twice would they be punished)!

2173 The Book is the revelation given to the Children of Israel. Here it seems to refer to the burning words of Prophets like Isaiah. For example, see Isaiah, chap. 24 or Isaiah 5:20-30, or Isaiah 3:16-26.

2174 What are the two occasions referred to? It may be that "twice" is a figure of speech for "more than once", "often". Or it may be that the two occasions refer to (1) the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., when the Jews were carried off into captivity, and (2) the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.C. 70, after which the Temple was never rebuilt. See n. 2168 above. On both occasions it was a judgement of Allah for the sins of the Jews, their backslidings, and their arrogance.

5. When the first of the warnings came to pass, We sent against you Our servants given to terrible warfare:(2175) They entered the very inmost parts of your homes; and it was a warning (completely) fulfilled.

2175 A good description of the warlike Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonians. They were servants of Allah in the sense that they were instruments through which the wrath of Allah was poured out on the Jews, for they penetrated through their lands, their Temple , and their homes, and carried away the Jews, men and women, into captivity. As regards "the daughters of Zion " see the scathing condemnation in Isaiah, 3:16-26.

6. Then did We grant you the Return as against them:(2176) We gave you increase in resources and sons, and made you the more numerous in man-power.

2176 The return of the Jews from the Captivity was about 520 B.C. They started life afresh. They rebuilt the Temple . They carried out various reforms and built up a new Judaism in connection with Ezra. See Appendix II following S. 5. For a time they prospered. Meanwhile their old oppressors the Babylonians had been absorbed by Persia . Subsequently Persia was absorbed in Alexander's Empire. The whole of western Asia was Hellenized, and the new school of Jews was Hellenized also, and had a strong centre in Alexandria . But their footing in Palestine continued, and under the Asmonaean Dynasty (B.C. 167-63), they had a national revival, and the names of the Maccabees are remembered as those of heroes. Another dynasty, that of the Idumaeans, (B.C. 63 to B.C. 4), to which Herod belonged, also enjoyed some semi-independent power. The sceptre of

Syria (including Palestine) passed to the Romans in B.C. 65, and Jewish feudatory Kings held power under them. But the Jews again showed a stiff-necked resistance to Allah's Messenger in the time of Jesus, and the inevitable doom followed in the complete and final destruction of the Temple under Titus in 70 A.C.

7. If ye did well, ye did well for yourselves; if ye did evil, (ye did it) against yourselves.(2177) So when the second of the warnings came to pass, (We permitted your enemies) to disfigure your faces,(2178) and to enter your Temple(2179) as they had entered it before, and to visit with destruction all that fell into their power.(2180)

2177 This is a parenthetical sentence. If anyone follows Allah's Law, the benefit goes to himself: he does not bestow a favour on anyone else. Similarly evil brings its own recompense on the doer of evil.

2178 The second doom was due to the rejection of the Message of Jesus. "To disfigure your faces" means to destroy any credit or power you may have got: the face shows the personality of the man.

2179 Titus's destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.C.. was complete. He was a son of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, and at the date of the destruction of Jerusalem , had the title of Caesar as heir to the throne. He ruled as Roman Emperor from 79 to 81 A.C..

2180 Merivale in his *Ramans Under the Empire* gives a graphic account of the siege and final destruction (ed. 1890, 7:221-255). The population of Jerusalem was then 200,000. According to the Latin historian Tacitus it was as much as 600,000. There was a famine and there were massacres. There was much fanaticism. The judgement of Merivale is: "They" (the Jews) "were judicially abandoned to their own passions and the punishment which naturally awaited them." (7:221).

8. It may be that your Lord may (yet) show Mercy(2181) unto you; but if ye revert (to your sins), We shall revert (to Our punishments): And we have made Hell a prison for those who reject Faith.(2182)

2181 Now we come to the time of our Holy Prophet. In spite of all the past, the Jews could still have obtained Allah's forgiveness if they had not obstinately rejected the greatest of the Prophets also. If they were to continue in their sins, Allah's punishment would also continue to visit them.

2182 There is such a thing as disgrace in this life, but the final disgrace is in the Hereafter, and that will be irretrievable.

Notice that the allegorical reference to Jewish history, when brought into relation with the true meaning of *Mi'raj,* refers to the constant struggle of the individual soul against evil. It has its setbacks and its punishments. But if it is true to itself and is true to the Faith in Allah, Allah will give it strength and make it successful in its fight against evil. For Allah's Mercy is unbounded and comes to suffering humanity again and again. (R).

9. Verily this Qur´an doth guide to that which is most right (or stable),(2183) and giveth the Glad Tidings to the Believers who work deeds of righteousness, that they shall have a magnificent reward;

2183 The instability and crookedness of the Jewish soul having been mentioned, the healing balm which should have cured it is now pointed out. The Message of the Qur'an is for all. Those who have Faith and show that Faith in their conduct must reap their spiritual reward. But those who reject Faith cannot escape punishment. Apart from what is past, apart from questions of national or racial history, there is a spiritual Hope-and a spiritual Danger—for every soul.

10. And to those who believe not in the Hereafter, (it announceth) that We have prepared for them a Penalty Grievous (indeed).

11. The prayer that man should make for good, he maketh for evil;(2184) for man is given to hasty (deeds).

2184 Man in his ignorance or haste mistakes evil for good, and desires what he should not have. The wise and instructed soul has patience and does not put its own desires above the wisdom of Allah. He receives with contentment the favours of Allah, and prays to be rightly guided in his desires and petitions.

12. We have made the Night and the Day two(2185) (of Our) Signs: the Sign of the Night have We obscured, while the Sign of the Day We have made to enlighten you; that ye may seek bounty from your Lord,(2186) and that ye may know the number and count of the years: all things have We explained in detail.

2185 If we were to cry when it is night, we shall look foolish when it is day; for the night is but a preparation or the day: perhaps, as the last verse says, we pray for the day when we want rest for the night. Both are Signs from Allah. Darkness and light stand for ignorance and knowledge. "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." Darkness and light may also stand for shadow and sunshine, sorrow and joy: both may be necessary for our development.

2186 By the physical light we see physical facts. And this physical gift of Allah is good for us in two ways; (1) we can arrange for our livelihood, or we can attain knowledge of the physical sciences and gain some control over the physical forces of nature; and (2) the daily rising and setting of the sun gives us the computation of days and years, for the physical natural year is the solar year. But there is spiritual light even more precious: by it we can similarly attain two objects, *viz.* (1) our spiritual livelihood and knowledge, and (2) our computation of the stages we reach in our spiritual years. Let us be patient and seek everything as from Allah-in joy and in sorrow, in knowledge and in want of knowledge of those things which are above us. Let us rejoice in what Allah has given us, and not be impatient about those things which He in His wisdom has thought fit to withhold from us. But all things should be sought and striven for under the guidance of the All-Knowing Allah.

13. Every man´s fate(2187) We have fastened on his own neck: On the Day of Judgment We shall bring out for him a scroll, which he will see spread open.(2188)

2187 *Fate: Ta'ir,* literally a bird, hence an omen, an evil omen, fate. *Cf.* 36:19. The Arabs like the ancient Romans, sought to read the mysteries of human fate from the flight of birds. And many of us in our own day seek to read our future fortunes by similar superstitions. We read in the previous verse that there are Signs of Allah, but they are not meant to subserve the vulgar purpose of disclosing our future destiny in a worldly sense. They are meant for quite other purposes, as we have explained. Our real fate does not depend upon birds or omens or stars. It depends on our deeds, good or evil, and they hang round our necks, (see also n. 484). (R).

2188 These deeds, good or evil, will be embodied in a scroll which will be quite open to us in the light of the Day of Judgement, however much we may affect to be ignorant of it now or waste our energies in prying into mysteries that do not concern us.

14. (It will be said to him:) "Read thine (own) record: Sufficient is thy soul this day to make out an account against thee."(2189)

2189 Our true accusers are our own deeds. Why not look to them instead of vainly prying into something superstitious which we call a book of fortune or a book of omens? *(Cf.* 85:3).

15. Who receiveth guidance, receiveth it for his own benefit: who goeth astray doth so to his own loss:(2190) No bearer of burdens can bear the burden(2191) of another: nor would We visit with Our Wrath until We had sent a messenger (to give warning).

2190 The doctrine of personal responsibility is insisted on, and the basis of ethics is shown to be our own good or evil as furthering or obstructing our highest development.

2191 The doctrine of vicarious atonement is condemned. Salvation for the wicked cannot be attained by the punishment of the innocent. One man cannot bear the burden of another; that would be unjust. Every man must bear his own personal responsibility. *Cf.* 6:164. But Allah never visits His wrath on anyone until due warning is conveyed to him through an accredited messenger.

16. When We decide to destroy a population, We (first) send a definite order to those among them who are given the good things of this life(2192) and yet transgress; so that the word is proved true(2193) against them: then (it is) We destroy them utterly.

2192 Allah's Mercy gives every chance to the wicked to repent. When wickedness gets so rampant that punishment becomes inevitable, even then Allah's Mercy and

Justice act together. Those who are highly gifted from Allah-it may be with wealth or position or it may be with talents and opportunities--are expected to understand and obey. They are given a definite order and warning. If they still transgress there is no further room for argument. They cannot plead that they were ignorant. The command of the Lord is proved against them, and its application is called for beyond doubt. Then it is that their punishment is completed.

2193 *Qawl* here has the sense of word, order, law, charge framed against one under a definite law (*Cf.* 36:7).

17. How many generations have We destroyed after Noah?(2194) and enough is thy Lord to note and see the sins of His servants.(2195)

2194 Noah's Flood is taken as a new starting point in history. But even after that hundreds of empires, towns, and generations have perished for their wickedness.

2195 Let not the wicked think, because they are given a lease of life and luxury for a time, that their wickedness has escaped notice. Allah notes and sees all things, both open and secret. He knows the hidden motives and thoughts of men, and He has no need of any other evidence. His knowledge and sight are all-sufficient.

18. If any do wish for the transitory things (of this life), We readily(2196) grant them - such things as We will, to such person as We will: in the end have We provided Hell for them: they will burn therein, disgraced and rejected.(2197)

2196 An explanation is now given of how it is that prosperity sometimes seems to attend the wicked. The explanation is threefold: (1) the transitory things of this life are worth little in the eternal scheme of things; (2) even they are provided, not just because their recipients wish for them, but according to a definite Plan of Allah; and (3) in the end there is for the wicked the eternal misery and deprivation of grace-trie Hell which is worse than destruction in the terms of this world.

2197 All the pride and insolence will then be brought low. The disgrace and the exclusion from the "sight of the Face of Allah" will by themselves be punishments of which the magnitude cannot be measured in the terms of our present material life.

19. Those who do wish for the (things of) the Hereafter,(2198) and strive therefor with all due striving, and have Faith,-(2199) they are the ones whose striving is acceptable (to Allah..

2198 This is in contrast to the last verse. Those who wish for mere earthly good sometimes get it and misuse it. Those whose eyes are fixed on the Hereafter, they too share in their Lord's bounty provided they fulfil the conditions explained in the next note; but their wishes and endeavours are more acceptable in the sight of Allah.

2199 A mere wish for moral and spiritual good is not enough. It must be backed up by hard endeavour and supported by a lively Faith. On those conditions the wishes are accepted by Allah.

20. Of the bounties of thy Lord We bestow freely on all- These as well as those: The bounties of thy Lord are not closed (to anyone).(2200)

2200 Allah's favours are showered on all--the just and the unjust, the deserving and the undeserving. But there is a difference as explained in the last two verses.

21. See how We have bestowed more on some than on others; but verily the Hereafter is more in rank and gradation and more in excellence.(2201)

2201 Nor should man suppose that all gifts are of equal value. The spiritual ones rank far higher in dignity and real worth than the transitory ones. Therefore it is altogether wrong to compare the worldly prosperity of a wicked man with the apparent want of it to a man of spiritual worth. There is no comparison between them when measured by right standards.

22. Take not with Allah another object of worship;(2202) or thou (O man!) wilt sit in disgrace and destitution.(2203)

2202 The seeming inequality of gifts to men might make short-sighted men impugn the impartiality of Allah. But the fault lies with such men's own want of knowledge and want of Faith. There is no excuse for them to seek other objects of worship than Allah. For there is none worthy of worship except Allah.

2203 If foolish men turn to false objects of worship, they will not only be disappointed, but they will lose the respect of their own fellow-men, and spiritually they will be reduced to destitution. All their talents and their words will be of no avail.

23. Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life,(2204) say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.

2204 The spiritual and moral duties are now brought into juxtaposition. We are to worship none but Allah, because none but Allah is worthy of worship, not because "the Lord thy God is a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me". (Exod. 20:5). Note that the act of worship may be collective as well as individual; hence the plural *ta'budu.* The kindness to parents is an individual act of piety; hence the singular *taqul, qul,* etc.

24. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing(2205) of humility, and say: "My Lord! bestow on them thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood."(2206)

2205 *Cf.* 15:88 and n. 2011, and 26:215. The metaphor is that of a high-flying bird which lowers her wing out of tenderness to her offspring. There is a double aptness. (1) When the parent was strong and the child was helpless, parental affection was showered on the child: when the child grows up and is strong, and the parent is helpless, can he do less than bestow similar tender care on the parent? (2) But more: he must approach the matter with gentle humility; for does not parental love remind him of the love with which Allah cherished His creatures? There is something here more than simple human gratitude: it goes up into the highest spiritual region.

2206 Note that we are asked to honour our father and mother, not "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exod. 20:12), but upon much higher and more universal grounds, such as befit a perfect revelation. In the first place, not merely respect, but cherishing kindness, and humility to parents, are commanded. In the second place this command is bracketed with the command to worship the One True God: Parental love should be to us a type of divine love: nothing that we can do can ever really compensate for that which we have received. In the third place (see next verse) our spiritual advancement is tested by this: we cannot expect Allah's forgiveness if we are rude or unkind to those who unselfishly brought us up.

25. Your Lord knoweth best what is in your hearts: If ye do deeds of righteousness, verily He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again (in true penitence).(2207)

2207 It is the heart, and its hidden and secret motives, by which we are judged: for Allah knows them all.

26. And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and to the wayfarer:(2208) But squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift.(2209)

2208 In the Jewish Decalogue, which was given to a primitive and hard-hearted people, this refinement of kindness-to those in want and to wayfarers *(i.e.,* total strangers whom you come across) finds no place. Nor was there much danger of their wasting their substance out of exuberance. Even the command "to honour thy father and mother" comes after the ceremonial observance of the Sabbath. With us, the worship of Allah is linked up with kindness-to parents, kindred, those in want, those who are far from their homes though they may be total strangers to us. It is not mere verbal kindness. They have certain rights which must be fulfilled.

2209 All charity, kindness, and help are conditioned by our own resources. There is no merit if we merely spend out of bravado or for idle show. How many families are ruined by extravagant expenses at wedding, funerals, etc., or (as they may call it) to "oblige friends or relatives", or to give to able-bodied beggars? To no one was this command more necessary than it is to Muslims of the present day.

27. Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones; and the Evil One is to his Lord (himself) ungrateful.(2210)

2210 Spendthrifts are not merely fools. They are of the same family as the Evil Ones. And the chief of the Evil Ones (notice the transition from the plural to the singular)- Satan himself-fell by his ingratitude to Allah. So those who misuse or squander Allah's gifts are also ungrateful to Allah.

28. And even if thou hast to turn away from them in pursuit of the Mercy from thy Lord which thou dost expect, yet speak to them a word of easy kindness.(2211)

2211 You may have to "turn away" from people for two reasons. (!) You may not have the wherewithal with which to entertain them and give them their rights; or (2) you may have to give them a wide berth because their thoughts are not as your thoughts. In either case there is no need to speak harshly to them. Your words should be those of "easy kindness", *i.e.,* the sort of kindness (not merely frigid politeness) which flows from pity and understanding and smooths over unnecessary difficulties in human intercourse.

29. Make not thy hand tied(2212) (like a niggard´s) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute.

2212 *Cf.* the phrase for miserliness in 5:64. We are not to be so lavish as to make ourselves destitute and incur the just censure of wise men, nor is it becoming to keep back our resources from the just needs of those who have a right to our help. Even strangers have such a right, as we saw in 17:26 above. But we must keep a just measure between our capacity and other people's needs.

30. Verily thy Lord doth provide sustenance in abundance for whom He pleaseth, and He provideth in a just measure,(2213) for He doth know and regard all His servants.

2213 If a foolish spendthrift pretends that his generosity, even if it ruins himself, is good for other people, he is reminded that Allah will take care of all. He knows every one's true needs and cares for them. He gives in abundance to some, but in all cases He gives in just measure. Who are we to pretend to greater generosity! (R).

31. Kill not your children(2214) for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin.

2214 The Arabs were addicted to female infanticide. In a society perpetually at war a son was a source of strength whereas a daughter was a source of weakness. Even now infanticide is not unknown in other countries for economic reasons. This crime against children's lives is here characterised as one of the greatest of sins.

32. Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road(2215) (to other evils).

2215 Literally, "it is evil as a road (or a way)." Adultery is not only shameful in itself and inconsistent with any self-respect or respect for others, but it opens the road to many evils. It destroys the basis of the family; it works against the interests of children born or to be born; it may cause murders and feuds and loss of reputation and property, and also loosens permanently the bonds of society. Not only should it be avoided as a sin, but any approach or temptation should be avoided.

33. Nor take life - which Allah has made sacred - except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority (to demand Qisas(2216) or to forgive): but let him nor exceed bounds in the matter of taking life; for he is helped (by the Law).

2216 On the subject of *Qisas* see 2:178 and the notes thereto. Under the strict limitations there laid down, a life may be taken for a life. The heir is given the right to demand the life; but he must not exceed due bounds, because he is helped by the Law. Some Commentators understand "he" in "he is helped (by the Law)" to refer to the heir of the person against whom *Qisas* is sought. He too will be helped by the Law, if the heir of the first slain exceeds the bounds of Law.

34. Come not nigh to the orphan´s property except to improve it,(2217) until he attains the age(2218) of full strength; and fulfil (Every)(2219) engagement, for (every) engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).(2220)

2217 *Cf.* 6:152, and other passages relating to orphans, *e.g.,* 2:220. If an orphan's property is touched at all, it should be to improve it, or to give him something better than he had before-never to take a personal advantage for the benefit of the guardian. A bargain that may be quite fair as between two independent persons would be, under this verse, unfair as between a guardian and his orphan ward until the latter attains the full age of understanding.

2218 *Ashuddah* means the age when the orphan reaches his full maturity of strength and understanding, say between the ages of 18 and 30. The age of legal majority may be 18 (as for certain purposes in India) or 21 (as in England). For certain purposes in Muslim law it may be less than 18. In the orphan's interest a much stricter standard is required in his case.

2219 The definite article *al* has here a generic meaning, and is best translated "every".

2220 From the context the engagements referred to would relate to beneficial contracts connected with the orphan's property or promises or undertakings given by the guardian or implied in the terms of his appointment. But the words are general and may be interpreted in the general sense. Note that this sentence does not occur in the similar passage in 6:152, where there was a discussion of social laws: it is appropriate here, where the discussion is about the guardian's personal and individual responsibility in a spiritual sense. *Cf.* 5:1).

35. Give full measure when ye measure, and weigh with a balance that is straight: that is the most fitting and the most advantageous in the final determination.(2221)

2221 Givingjust measure and weight is not only right in itself but is ultimately to the best spiritual and material advantage of the person who gives it.

36. And pursue not that of which thou hasth(2222) no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).

2222 Idle curiosity may lead us to nose into evil, through our ignorance that it is evil. We must guard against every such danger. We must only hear the things that are known to us to be of good report, and see things that are good and instructive and entertain in our hearts feelings or in our minds ideas that we have reason to expect will be spiritually profitable to us. We shall be called to account for the exercise of every faculty that has been given to us. This goes a little farther than a famous sculpture on a Japanese temple in which three monkeys are shown as putting their hands to their ears, eyes, and mouths, respectively, to show that they were not prepared to hear any evil, see any evil, or speak any evil. Here idle curiosity is condemned. Futility is to be avoided even if it does not reach the degree of positive evil.

37. Nor walk on the earth(2223) with insolence: for thou canst not rend the earth asunder, nor reach the mountains in height.

2223 Insolence, or arrogance, or undue elation at our powers or capacities, is the first step to many evils. Besides, it is unjustified. All our gifts are from Allah.

38. Of all such things the evil is hateful in the sight of thy Lord.

39. These are among the (precepts of) wisdom, which thy Lord has revealed to thee.(2224) Take not, with Allah, another object of worship, lest thou shouldst be thrown into Hell, blameworthy and rejected.(2225)

2224 The moral law, as expounded in 17:23-39 is far in advance of the bare Decalogue in that it searches out motives, and draws pointed attention to the weak and helpless if we are to reach any spiritual understanding of Allah. It begins with a mention of the worship of Allah, the One True God and ends with a similar mention to close the argument, thus emphasizing the fact that the love of Allah embraces the love of man and practical help of our fellow-creatures. (R).

2225 "Blameworthy" carries us back by reminiscence to 17:29, between which and this verse there is mention of crimes committed out of covetousness and a selfish disregard of other people's rights. "Rejected" carries back our reminiscence to 17:18, from which to here we have a reference to crimes that lead to deprivation of Allah's grace. The latter is of course wider than the former. Note how subtly the two streams of thought are here conjoined.

40. Has then your Lord (O Pagans!) preferred for you sons, and taken for Himself daughters among the angels?(2226) Truly ye utter a most dreadful saying!

2226 *Cf.* 16:57-59. Insistence on true worship means also exclusion of false worship or worship derogatory to Allah. In circles where daughters were despised

and even their lives had to be protected by special legislation, what could have been more dreadful than ascribing daughters to Allah?

41. We have explained (things) in various (ways) in this Qur´an, in order that they may receive(2227) admonition, but it only increases their flight (from the Truth)!

2227 Things are explained in the Qur'an from all points of view, individual and national, by means of stories, parables, and figures of speech, and by way of categorical commands. But those who are evil, instead of profiting by such instruction, often go farther and farther away from the Truth.

42. Say: If there had been (other) gods with Him, as they say,- behold, they would certainly have sought out a way to the Lord of the Throne!(2228)

2228 There is only One True God. But if, as polytheists say, there had been subsidiary gods, they would yet have had to go to the Throne of the Supreme God, for they could have done nothing without Him. Thus the Islamic idea of the unity of the Godhead is quite different from the polytheistic ideas of a supreme god, as in the Greek Pantheon, where Jupiter was often defied by the minor deities! But such ideas are absurd, as stated in the next verse *(Cf.* 21:21-22 and 23-91).

43. Glory to Him! He is high above all that they say!- Exalted and Great (beyond measure)!

44. The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory:(2229) there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; And yet ye understand not how they declare His glory! Verily He is Oft-Forbear, Most Forgiving!

2229 Al1 Creation, animate and inanimate, sings Allah's praises and celebrates His glory-animate, with consciousness, and inanimate, in the evidence which it furnishes of the unity and glory of Allah. All Nature bears witness to His power, wisdom, and goodness. It is only "ye" *i.e.,* those who reject the whole trend of your nature and deny Faith simply because ye have been given a limited amount of choice and free will-it is only such as "ye that understand not what every other creature understands and proclaims with joy and pride. What must be your degradation! And yet Allah bears with you and forgives you! Such is His goodness! (R).

45. When thou dost recite the Qur´an, We put, between thee and those who believe not in the Hereafter, a veil invisible:(2230)

2230 *Veil invisible.* Some Commentators understand *mastur* here as equivalent to *satir.* a veil that makes invisible, a thick or dark veil. But I think that the meaning of *mastur* (in the passive voice) as "hidden or invisible" is more consonant with the whole passage. If all nature, external and within ourselves, declares Allah's glory, those unfortunates who cut themselves off from their better nature are isolated from the true servants of Allah and the revelation of Allah, because (1) they are unfit for being in their company, and (2) because the servants of Allah and the revelation of Allah must be protected from the pain which blasphemy or rebellion must cause to their unsullied nature. The veil is none the less real even though it is invisible. (R).

46. And We put coverings over their hearts (and minds) lest they should understand the Qur´an, and deafness(2231) into their ears: when thou dost commemorate thy Lord and Him alone in the Qur´an, they turn on their backs, fleeing (from the Truth).

2231 The invisible veil being put against the ungodly on account of their deliberate rejection of Truth. The result is that their minds are fogged so that they cannot understand and their ears are cloned so that they cannot hear. In other words, the effect of Evil become cumulative in shutting out Allah's grace.

47. We know best why it is they listen, when they listen(2232) to thee; and when they meet in private conference, behold, the wicked say, "Ye follow none other than a man bewitched!"

2232 See last note. That being so, the only motive for the ungodly to listen to Allah's Truth is to scoff at it instead of to be instructed by it. They may make a show of listening, but when they meet together in private, they show themselves in their true colours. *Cf.* 2:14. They cannot help seeing that there is singular charm and attractiveness in Allah's Word, and that it consoles, helps, and elevates many people who receive it in the right spirit. So they pretend that they are superior to such people and laugh at them for listening to someone who is only under the influence of something which they call magic! (see also 25:8).

48. See what similes they strike for thee: but they have gone astray, and never can they find a way.(2233)

2233 Note that the word used is "Sabilan" "a way", not *"the way".* In going astray they have lost the way: but never can they find *any* means of getting back to that way, or of justifying themselves or making good their wicked similes.

49. They say: "What! when we are reduced to bones and dust, should we really be raised up (to be) a new creation?"(2234)

2234 They do not realise that Allah Who created them once out of nothing can create them again with memories of their past, in order to render to Him an account of how they used or misused the talents and opportunities which they were given. If it is to be a new Creation, what then? Bones and dust or ashes may yet retain something of the personality, which was enshrined in them. But even if they were reduced to stones or iron or anything, which their minds can conceive of as being most unlike them, yet there is nothing impossible to Allah! He has dearly sent a Message that we shall have to render an account of ourselves, and His Message is necessarily true *.(Cf.* 17:98 and 75:3).(R).

50. Say: "(Nay!) be ye stones or iron,

51. "Or created matter which, in your minds, is hardest (to be raised up),- (Yet shall ye be raised up)!" then will they say: "Who will cause us to return?" Say: "He who created you first!" Then will they wag their heads towards thee,(2235) and say, "When will that be?" Say, "May be it will be quite soon!

2235 The sceptic shifts his ground when he is cornered in argument. It is no longer tenable for him to say that it cannot happen or that there is no one who can bring him back to life and memory. He now gets shaky, and says, "Well, when is that going to happen?" The actual time no man can tell. Indeed that event will be on a plane in which there will be no Time. Our relative ideas of time and place will have been completely overthrown, and it will appear to us then, not that it has been postponed too long, but that it has come too soon! See the next verse and note.

52. "It will be on a Day when He will call you, and ye will answer (His call) with (words of) His praise, and ye will(2236) think that ye tarried but a little while!"(2237)

2236 It may be that this verse should not be in the inverted commas governed by the verb "say" in the last clause of the last verse. In that case, the answer to the sceptic would be finished in the last verse, and this verse would be a general statement applying also to the righteous, who will rise up celebrating the praises of Allah. But on the whole, I think it is better to take this verse as part of the answer to the sceptic referred to in the last verse.

2237 Whatever may have been your spiritual blindness in this life, the "new creation" will have opened your eyes to the Truth. No one will any longer be in any delusion as regards the Reality of Allah, and will be forced by their new circumstances, to recognise the Truth and sing Allah's praises. And all will be surprised at the seemingly short flight of time since they had their little ephemeral life on this earth. They will now appraise its true worth.

53. Say to My servants that they should (only) say those things that are best:(2238) for Satan doth sow dissensions among them: For Satan is to man an avowed enemy.

2238 This command refers to two situations. (1) Even to your enemies and the enemies of Allah you should speak fair: who are you to judge others? Judgment belongs to Allah alone, for He knows you *(i.e.,* all mankind) best, and your personal knowledge is at best imperfect. And Satan is always trying to divide mankind. (2) Amongst yourselves, also you should not entertain suspicions, but speak politely according to the best standards of human speech. A false or unkind word may destroy all your efforts at building up unity, because the forces of disruption are more numerous than the forces of unity.

54. It is your Lord that knoweth you best: If He please, He granteth(2239) you mercy, or if He please,

punishment: We have not sent thee to be a disposer of their affairs for them.

2239 Man should never for a single moment entertain a thought that would imply that he was wiser than Allah. Allah's knowledge is all-embracing. If He grants mercy to some that you consider wicked or punishment to some that you consider righteous, it is your knowledge or your deductions that are at fault, not Allah's righteous Plan. Even Prophets of Allah are not sent to arrange or dispose of men's affairs, but only to teach Allah's Message. How much less can ordinary men presume to judge other men? The *Mashi'ah*- Will and Plan of Allah-is above all human wisdom. (R).

55. And it is your Lord that knoweth best all beings that are in the heavens(2240) and on earth: We did bestow on some prophets more (and other) gifts than on others: and We gave to David (the gift of) the Psalms.(2241)

2240 Not only are we not to judge other ordinary men and carp at them, we are not to set up false standards for judging the Prophets of Allah, If one was born of the unlearned Arab race, he yet was a mercy to all the worlds. If one spoke to Allah as *Kalim Allah* or another's life as *Ruh Allah* begun with a spiritual miracle; it does not imply superiority. It only means that Allah's wisdom is more profound than we can fathom. (R).

2241 The spiritual gifts with which the prophets came may themselves take different forms, according to the needs of the world and the times in which they lived, as judged by the wisdom of Allah. A striking example here given is the gift of song and music as given to David, but it implies no superiority of David over others. David was given the *Zabur,* the psalter or Psalms, intended to be sung for the worship of Allah and the celebration of Allah's praise. For the Book of Psalms, see the last part of n. 669 to 4:163, where exactly the same words are used about David.

56. Say: "Call on those - besides Him - whom ye fancy: they have neither the power to remove your troubles from you nor to change them."(2242)

2242 Men's suspicions of each or of the prophets have been condemned in the previous verses. We now have the strongest condemnation of all, that of imagining any other being as being equal or in the same category with One True God. Allah has all power: they have no power. They cannot remove men's troubles. They cannot even mitigate or change them so as to afford the least relief. Why indulge in false worship?

57. Those whom they call upon do desire (for themselves) means of access to their Lord, - even those who are nearest:(2243) they hope for His Mercy and fear His Wrath: for the Wrath of thy Lord is something to take heed of.

2243 Where men or heroes, or prophets or angels are worshipped, the worship is futile: because (1) even if they are good and holy, and ever so near to Allah, yet the nearest of them have need to seek means of access to Allah, and they do seek such means, *viz,:* the hope of Allah's Grace: (2) though by their very nature it is impossible for us to suppose that they will incur the Wrath of Allah, yet they are but creatures and are subject to the law of personal responsibility.

58. There is not a population but We shall destroy it before the Day of Judgment or punish it with a dreadful Penalty:(2244) that is written in the (eternal) Record.

2244 These verses are a commentary on the last clause of the last verse. "The Wrath of thy Lord is something to take heed of." The godless thoughtlessly challenge Allah's Wrath, but do they realise its nature? Even the best of us must be moved with terror when we think of its consequences, were it not for His unbounded Mercy. Those who deny the Hereafter fail to realise its terrible Portents. They ask for Portents and Miracles now, but do they realise that their coming means destruction and misery to those who reject faith? They will come soon enough. The whole world will be convulsed before the Day of Judgment. The part of the wise is to prepare for it.

59. And We refrain from sending the signs, only because the men of former generations treated them as false:(2245) We sent the She-camel(2246) to the Thamud to open their eyes, but they treated her wrongfully: We only send the Signs by way of terror (and warning from evil).(2247)

2245 Past generations treated Signs and Portents with contempt or rebellion, and brought about their own undoing. It is only Allah's Mercy that gives them Grace for a time and prevents the coming of those Portents and Punishments which would overwhelm them if they were put to their trial at once.

2246 An example is cited from the story of Thamud. A wonderful she-camel was sent among them as a Portent and a Symbol. In their wickedness they hamstrung her. So instead of her reclaiming them she was a cause of their destruction, as their sin and rebellion were laid bare. For the story of the she-camel and the reference to the passages in which she is mentioned, see n. 1044 to 7:73.

2247 Signs, Miracles, and Portents are sent by Allah as a warning, to strike terror into the hearts of evildoers and reclaim them to the right path. I have discussed Fear as a motive for reclaiming certain kinds of hard hearts, in my note 82 to 2:74. But some hearts are so hard that even this motive does not work. As they have a limited free will given by Allah, they are to that extent free to choose. But when they actually choose evil, Allah in His infinite Mercy delays their punishment and removes the occasion for their immediate self-destruction by withholding the Signs which might make them transgress all the more and compass their total destruction.

60. Behold! We told thee that thy Lord doth encompass mankind round about:(2248) We granted the vision which We showed thee,(2249) but as a trial for men,- as also the Cursed Tree(2250) (mentioned) in the Qur´an: We put terror (and warning) into them, but it only increases their inordinate transgression!

2248 The reference may be to 72:28, probably an earlier Makkan revelation. But the argument is independent of time. This verse falls naturally into three divisions. Warnings and Portents and Signs are sent or not sent according to Allah's All-Wise Plan or Mercy and Justice: this is in no wise inconsistent with the apparent freedom given to the wicked: because (1) in any case Allah is all around all His creatures, and His delay as a Sign of Mercy in no way diminishes His power; (2) the Visions of Truth vouchsafed to Prophets of Allah are themselves Signs by which they can warn the ungodly; and (3) sometimes it is more merciful to give them time by not immediately bringing the matter to judgement. (R).

2249 Some Commentators take this as referring to the *Mi'raj* (17:1) and others to other spiritual visions. Such visions are miracles, and become a stumbling block to unbelievers. They are an encouragement to men of faith. Thus they are "a trial for men".

2250 The tree of *Zaqqum,* a bitter and pungent tree described as growing at the bottom of Hell, a type of all that is disagreeable. See 37:62-65; 44:43-46; and 56:52. All these are Surahs chronologically earlier than this Surah. The application of the name to a tree of the myrobalan kind in the region of Jericho is, I think, of post-Quranic date. It is a trial for wrongdoers. See 37:63 and n. 4073.

61. Behold! We said to the angels:(2251) "Bow down unto Adam": They bowed down except Iblis: He said, "Shall I bow down to one whom Thou didst create from clay?"

2251 *Cf.* 7:11-18, which deals, as is the case here, with the temptation of the individual human soul, while 2:30-38 deals with the collective race of man through Adam. Arrogance, jealousy, spite, and hatred are the ingredients of the story of Iblis.

62. He said: "Seest Thou? this is the one whom Thou hast honoured above me! If Thou wilt but respite me to the Day of Judgment, I will surely bring his descendants under my sway - all but a few!"(2252)

2252 The power of Evil over man is due to man's limited free will. In other words man hands himself to Evil. As to those who loyally worship and serve Allah, Evil has no power over them. This is expressly mentioned in verse 65 below, and in other places *(Cf.* 34:20).

63. ((Allah)) said: "Go thy way;(2253) if any of them follow thee, verily Hell will be the recompense of you (all)- an ample recompense.

2253 The power of Evil is summarily dismissed, but not without a clear warning. "Do thy worst: if any of them misuse their limited free will and deliberately follow thee, they must take the consequences with thee: all of you must answer according to your personal responsibility."

64. "Lead to destruction those whom thou canst among them,(2254) with thy (seductive) voice;(2255) make assaults on them(2256) with thy cavalry and thy

infantry; mutually share with them wealth and children;(2257) and make promises to them." But Satan promises them nothing but deceit.(2258)

2254 "Do thy worst; but ye are both warned that that path leads to destruction."

2255 Evil has many snares for mankind. The one that is put in the foreground is the voice-the seductive personal appeal, that "makes the worse appear the better part."

2256 The forcible assault of Evil is next mentioned under the metaphor of cavalry and infantry. It is when cajolery and tempting fair-seeming seem to fail that an attack is made in force with weapons of violence of all kinds, like the different arms in an organised army

2257 If the first assaults are resisted, Evil has other weapons in its armoury. Tangible fruits are dangled before the eyes, ill-gotten gains and children of sin, that follow from certain very alluring methods of indulgence in passion. Or it may be children dedicated to sin or worldly gains, etc. And then there are all kinds of promises for the future.

2258 This is a parenthetical clause inserted to show up what the promises of the Evil One are worth.

65. "As for My servants,(2259) no authority shalt thou have over them:" Enough is thy Lord for a Disposer of affairs.(2260)

2259 This verse should be read along with the two preceding ones to complete their meaning. Evil has no power except over those who yield to its solicitations.

2260 As Evil has no authority over the sincere servants of Allah, they should put their trust completely in Him. For He is All-Sufficient to carry out their affairs, and by His grace, to save them from all harm and danger.

66. Your Lord is He That maketh the Ship go smoothly for you through the sea, in order that ye may seek of His Bounty.(2261) For he is unto you most Merciful.

2261 This illustration of the sea, and the skill with which, by Allah's grace, men pass through it with ease in order to earn material gains by commerce, social gains by human intercourse, and spiritual gains by knowledge, is frequently used to enforce Allah's goodness to man. *Cf.* 2:164.

67. When distress seizes you at sea, those that ye call upon - besides Himself - leave you in the lurch! but when He brings you back safe to land, ye turn away (from Him). Most ungrateful(2262) is man!

2262 Against Allah's gracious gifts and mercies is contrasted man's ingratitude. In danger he remembers Allah, the One True God, but relapses into his own fancies when the danger is past., *Cf.* also 10:22-23. (R).

68. Do ye then feel secure that He will not cause you to be swallowed up beneath the earth(2263) when ye are on land, or that He will not send against you a violent tornado (with showers of stones) so that ye shall find no one to carry out your affairs for you?

2263 Man is safe neither on land nor at sea except by the grace and mercy of Allah. How forcibly this is brought home to us by the Quetta earthquake of 31st May 1935, when tens of thousands of men, women, and children, perished in a few moments, by night, buried in debris! The stories of violent destructive tornadoes in such areas as the southern United States are equally impressive. The destruction is so sudden that the victims have no time to arrange anything. They are simply wiped out.

69. Or do ye feel secure that He will not send you back a second time to sea and send against you a heavy gale to drown you because of your ingratitude,(2264) so that ye find no helper. Therein against Us?

2264 If a man flees from the Wrath of Allah, there is no place secure for him. He may flee from sea to land, and back again from land to sea. But his life depends on the Disposer of all affairs. He may go again and again to sea, and perhaps finally end by being drowned.

70. We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our Creation.(2265)

2265 The distinction and honour conferred by Allah on man are recounted in order to enforce the corresponding dudes and responsibilities of man. He is raised to a position of honour above the brute creation: he has been granted talents by which he can transport himself from place to place by land, sea, and now by air: all the means of the sustenance and growth of every part of his nature are provided by Allah, and his spiritual faculties (the greatest gift of Allah) raise him above the greater part of Allah's Creation. Should he not then realise his noble destiny and prepare for the real life in the Hereafter?

71. One day We shall call together all human beings with their (respective) Imams:(2266) those who are given their record in their right hand will read it (with pleasure), and they will not be dealt with unjustly in the least.(2267)

2266 I have discussed various meanings *of Imam* in 2:124, n, 124. What is the meaning here? The Commentators are divided. Some understand the meaning to be that each People or Group will appear with its Leader, who will bear witness to its virtues or sins: *Cf.* 16:84. Another view is that the *Imam* is their revelation, their Book. A third is that the *Imam* is the record of deeds spoken of in the next clause. I prefer the first.

2267 Literally, by the value of *a fatil.* a small skin in the cleft of a date stone: this has no value.

72. But those who were blind in this world, will be lind in the Hereafter,(2268) and most astray from the Path.

2268 On the Judgement Day the children of light will receive and peruse their record, and will render joyful thanks to Allah for His Mercies. What of the children of darkness? They had already been blind in this world's life, and they will not receive the light of Allah's Countenance then. On the contrary they will find that the longer the time they have travelled, the farther away they have gone from the Path. Notice the association of ideas--blindness, not seeing the light, going farther and farther away from the Path.

73. And their purpose was to tempt thee away from that which We had revealed unto thee, to substitute in our name something quite different;(2269) (in that case), behold! they would certainly have made thee (their) friend!

2269 It happens with men of Allah, and it happened with the Prophet, that they are tempted by the world with many things which appeal to the world generally, if they would make some small concession in their favour. The "small concession" may hold the key of the position, and neutralise the whole teaching sent by Allah. If the Prophet had accepted wealth and position among the Quraysh and "only respected" their idols! The Quraysh would have taken him into their inner circle! A dishonest liar like Musaylama would have jumped at the opportunity and been hailed as a friend and associate and made much of. But Prophets of Allah are made of sterner stuff. They are given special strength to resist all plausible deception. (R).

74. And had We not given thee strength, thou wouldst nearly have inclined to them(2270) a little.

2270 From a purely human point of view it may seem policy to make a small "concession" *to* men's weakness in order to fulfil a divine mission. But the divine Messenger is given special strength to resist such temptations.

75. In that case We should have made thee taste an equal portion(2271) (of punishment) in this life, and an equal portion in death: and moreover thou wouldst have found none to help thee against Us!(2272)

2271 If such a thing was possible for a true Messenger of Allah, *viz.:* a compromise with evil and a dereliction of his mission, he would be no exception to the law of personal responsibility. Indeed, as the power and the responsibility were greater, the punishment would have been greater too. It would have been double-an exposure in this life and the usual punishment in or after death for a desertion of the Truth.

2272 The motive held out by the world for a compromise with Truth is itself fallacious. The motive is that the compromise may bring influence, position, and opportunity, if not wealth and the other good things of life. But these in themselves (if attained) would not be of use or help if pitted against the command of Allah.

76. Their purpose was to scare thee off the land,(2273) in order to expel thee; but in that case they would not have stayed (therein) after thee, except for a little while.

2273 As happened in the case of the Prophet, the enemies try to frighten the Prophet of Allah away from their midst, so that, once away, they could expel him and keep him out. But they are counting without the Plan of Allah. If they persecute the righteous, they dig their own graves! (R).

77. (This was Our) way with the messengers We sent before thee: thou wilt find no change in Our ways.(2274)

2274 This was no new thing in history. Allah protects His own, and the ungodly cannot long enjoy the fruits of their unrighteousness even if their punishment be delayed a little while.

78. Establish regular prayers -(2275) at the sun´s decline till the darkness of the night, and the morning prayer and reading: for the prayer and reading in the morning carry their testimony.(2276)

2275 The Commentators understand here the command for the five daily canonical prayers, *viz.:* the four from the declination of the sun from the zenith to the fullest darkness of the night, and the early morning prayers, Fajr, which is usually accompanied by a reading of the Holy Qur'an. The four afternoon prayers are: Zuhr, immediately after the sun begins to decline in the afternoon; 'Asr, in the late afternoon; Maghrib, immediately after sunset; and Isha, after the glow of sunset has disappeared and the full darkness of the night has set in. There is difference of opinion as to the meaning of particular words and phrases, but none as to the general effect of this passage. *(Cf.* n. 3521).

2276 The morning prayer is specially singled out for separate mention, because the morning is a "Holy hour" and special spiritual influences act on the soul awaking from the night's rest Special testimony is borne to the prayers of this hour by the angelic host.

79. And pray in the small watches of the morning: (it would be)(2277) an additional prayer (or spiritual profit) for thee: soon will thy Lord raise thee to a Station of Praise and Glory!(2278)

2277 This was held to be addressed specially to the Holy Prophet who usually prayed more than the five canonical prayers. The *Tahajjud' was* a prayer after midnight in the small watches of the morning.

2278 To the Prophet was to be assigned in the Hereafter the highest Post of Honour and Glory- the *Maqam Mahmud* implying his excellence above all other Prophets. The immediate reference may be to the hope that the Makkan persecution will soon be over and the glorious work in Madinah will begin. (R).

80. Say: "O my Lord! Let my entry be(2279) by the Gate of Truth and Honour, and likewise my exit by the Gate of Truth and Honour; and grant me from Thy Presence an authority to aid (me)."(2280)

2279 The entry and exit here referred to may be interpreted in four senses: (1) entry into death and exit at the resurrection for the righteous, who have purified their souls by prayer (last verse) and spiritual teaching from the Qur'an (next verse), there is on each occasion a fuller and fuller realisation and enjoyment of truth and honour: for those who are estranged from Allah, the effect is the opposite: the truth becomes bitter ant there is ignominy and exposure instead of honour; (2) entry for the Holy Prophet into the new life at Madinah which was still in the womb of futurity, and exit from the life of persecution and the milieu of falsehood, which surrounded him in his native city of Makkah still given up to idolatry; (3) referring to the impending Hijrah again, the prayer may mean, "Let it be from pure motives of truth and spiritual honour, and not from motives of anger against the city of Makkah or its persecutors, or of ambition or worldly power from the city of Madinah, which was ready to lay everything at the Prophet's feet": (4) generally, entry and exit at every stage of life.

2280 All prayer must be for Allah's aid and authority. However much we may plan, our success must depend on His aid. However noble our motives, we have no right to imperil any lives unless there is authority in the Word of Allah. The Prophet only acts on Allah's commission and inspiration.

81. And say: "Truth has (now) arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish."(2281)

2281 From its nature falsehood must perish: for it is the opposite of Truth, and Truth must ever prevail *(Cf. n.* 3861).

82. We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur´an that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe: to the unjust it causes nothing but loss after loss.(2282)

2282 In Allah's revelation there is healing for our broken spirits, hope for our spiritual future, and joy in the forgiveness of our sins. All who work in faith will share in these privileges. It is only the rebels against Allah's Law who will suffer loss. The more they will oppose Truth, the deeper down will they go into the mire-the state of sin and Wrath, which is worse than destruction.

83. Yet when We bestow Our favours on man, he turns away and becomes remote on his side (instead of coming to Us), and when evil seizes him he gives himself up to despair!(2283)

2283 Truth saves us from two extremes: when we are happy, we are saved from being puffed up, for we realise that everything comes from Allah; and when we suffer misfortunes, we are not in despair, for we know that Allah is our sure refuge and help *(Cf.* 41:51).

84. Say: "Everyone acts according to his own disposition: But your Lord knows best who it is that is best guided on the Way."(2284)

2284 If the wicked go their own ways, there is nothing to discourage us. It is their nature. We must seek and hold fast to true guidance.

85. They ask thee concerning the Spirit (of inspiration).(2285) Say: "The Spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord: of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, (O men!)"

2285 What is the nature of inspiration? Who brings it? Can it ask its Bringer questions? Can we ask anything which we wish? These are the sort of questions always asked when inspiration is called in question. The answer is given here. Inspiration is one of those high spiritual mysteries which cannot be explained in the terms of everyday human experience. It is spiritual. The Spirit (Gabriel) does not come of his own will. He conies by the command of Allah, and reveals what Allah commands him to reveal. Of the sum total of true spiritual knowledge what a small part it is that ordinary mortals can understand! They can be only given that which they can understand, however dimly. We are not in a position to ask anything that we wish. If we did so, it would only make us look foolish, for the guidance comes from Allah's Wisdom, not from our worldly knowledge.

86. If it were Our Will, We could take away that which We have sent thee by inspiration:(2286) then wouldst thou find none to plead thy affair in that matter as against Us,-

2286 Even the spiritual knowledge that comes to us conies because of the favour and mercy of Allah. If He were to withhold it, who can call Him in question?

87. Except for Mercy from thy Lord:(2287) for his bounty is to thee (indeed) great.

2287 In that case the only one who can plead for us is the Mercy of Allah. We can interpret the phrase in its widest abstract sense, as well as in the concrete sense of the title which is applied to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the Mercy of Allah. Thus we come from the abstract question to the concrete question of the Qur'an, which is referred to by name in the verses that follow.

88. Say: "If the whole of mankind and Jinns(2288) were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur´an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.(2289)

2288 For the meaning of "Jinns", see n. 929 to 6:100.

2289 The proof of the Qur'an is in its own beauty and nature, and the circumstances in which it was promulgated. The world is challenged to produce a Book like it and has not produced one. It is the only revealed Book whose text stands pure and uncorrupted today. *Cf.,* for a similar challenge, 2:23,10:38, and 11:13.

89. And We have explained to man, in this Qur´an, every kind of similitude:(2290) yet the greater part of men refuse (to receive it) except with ingratitude!(2291)

2290 In the Qur'an everything is explained in detail from various points of view, by commands, similitudes, examples, stories, parables, etc. It does not merely narrate stories or lay down vague abstract propositions. It gives very detailed help in outward and inner life.

2291 One form in which it can be received with ingratitude is to pay verbal tribute to it but not study it as it ought to be studied (2:121 *haqqah tilawatihi),* or to disobey its precepts or standards.

90. They say: "We shall not believe in thee, until thou cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth,(2292)

2292 *Cf.* 2:60.

91. "Or (until) thou have a garden of date trees and vines, and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst, carrying abundant water;(2293)

2293 This ill-assorted and crude jumble of the sort of miracles which the Unbelievers wanted is in very appropriate contrast to the sober and reasoned argument which is begun in the last sentence of verse 93 and continued in sections 11 and 12, which close this Surah. It is throughout reminiscent of the materialistic imagination of the Jewish sceptics, which was mainly responsible for the fall of the Jewish nation (see verse 104 below). For a thirsty people sojourning in a dry land, the finding of a spring of water as in the story of Moses or of the well of Zamzam is an appropriate miracle. But miracles are not for the faithless crowds to gape at. A beautiful well-watered Garden is a symbol of Felicity; but a sceptic cannot order Allah to produce it for his pleasure. The same may be said about a house adorned with gold, except that its symbolism is even more materialistic. The fall of the sky or producing Allah face to face or climbing to the skies by a ladder, or bringing down a book of parchment which men could handle, are all irreverent suggestions that make no distinction between spiritual and material things.

92. "Or thou cause the sky to fall in pieces, as thou sayest (will happen), against us;(2294) or thou bring Allah and the angels before (us) face to face;(2295)

2294 Contrast the sublime passages with 82:1, or that in 25:25, where the final breaking up of the firmaments as we know is referred to in the world's catastrophe, with the ridiculous demand that it should be done for the sport of the sceptics!

2295 *Cf.* 2:55 and 4:153 about the desire of the Israelites to see Allah face to face; and 6:8-9, about angels coming down to convince men.

93. "Or thou have a house adorned with gold, or thou mount a ladder right into the skies.(2296) No, we shall not even believe in thy mounting until thou send down to us a book that we can read."(2297) Say: "Glory to my Lord! Am I aught but a man,- a messenger?"(2298)

2296 *Cf.* 6:35 about the ladder in the skies.

2297 *Cf.* 6:7 for the foolish idea of materialistic sceptics that a spiritual revelation could come down from the heavens on a piece of parchment that they can touch.

2298 A prophet or messenger of Allah is a man at the command of Allah, and not to satisfy the disingenuous whims and fancies of Unbelievers. Miracles greater than any that their foolish fancies could devise were before them. The Qur'an was such a miracle, and it is a standing miracle that lasts through the ages. Why did they not believe? The real reason was spite and jealousy like that of Iblis. See next verse.

94. What kept men back from belief when Guidance came to them, was nothing but this: they said, "Has Allah sent a man(2299) (like us) to be (His) Messenger."

2299 When a man is raised to honour and dignity, his brothers rejoice, for it is an honour that reflects its glory on them. But those with evil in their hearts are jealous like their prototype IblTs, (17:61, n. 2251). To such men the mere fact that their own brother receives the grace of Allah is enough to turn them against that brother. Any other reasons they may devise are mere make-believe.

95. Say, "If there were settled, on earth, angels walking about(2300) in peace and quiet, We should certainly have sent them down from the heavens an angel for a messenger."

2300 The argument is that if the angels inhabited this earth, an angel from heaven could be sent down as a messenger to them, as they could mutually understand each other, and the Message of Allah could be explained without difficulty. But the earth is inhabited by men, and the men themselves are divided into races, or groups, or nations. To each group is sent a prophet from among their brethren: to 'Ad. *their brother Hud* (11:50); to Thamud, their brother Salih (11:61); and so on. As a matter of fact, with wicked men, constituted as they are, the appearance of an angel causes disturbance and an unseemly riot, as in the case of the angels that came to Lot (11:77-80). In any case they cannot carry out an effective mission among men (6:8-9).

96. Say: "Enough is Allah for a witness between me(2301) and you: for He is well acquainted with His servants, and He sees (all things).

2301 'If you want a real witness, it is not these sorts of fancy miracles, but the witness of the true ever-living God. Purify your hearts, and ask Him in true contrition and repentance, and He will guide you and show you the Way.' (R).

97. It is he whom Allah guides, that is on true Guidance; but he whom He leaves astray - for such wilt thou find no protector besides Him.(2302) On the Day of Judgment We shall gather, them together, prone on their faces, blind, dumb, and deaf: their abode will be Hell: every time it shows abatement, We shall increase from them the fierceness of the Fire.(2303)

2302 'All your insincere subtleties are of no use. The only real guidance is the guidance of Allah. If you do not seek His grace, you will be lost. Besides Him, there is no true friend or protector.'

2303 'If you still persist in your evil ways, what is to be your evil end? You will become more and more identified with the company of Evil. You will come to shame and ignominy, like men thrown down prone on their faces. You will lose the use of all the faculties of judgement with which Allah had endowed you. Instead of seeing, you will be blind to Allah's Signs. Instead of having the power of seeking Him in prayer and rejoicing in His grace, you will be dumb. Instead of hearing the harmony and music of the spheres, as typified in the pure and harmonious lives of men, you will hear nothing or only hear dull or confused sounds like deaf men. The scorching fire of your punishment will not grow less, but grow more fierce as you go deeper into Hell.'

98. That is their recompense, because they rejected Our signs, and said, "When we are reduced to bones and broken dust, should we really be raised up (to be) a new Creation?"(2304)

2304 This phrase is repeated from 17:49. The reminiscence rounds oft the argument. After certain moral precepts to which Faith was linked, we have had a discussion of unfaith. Its various motives have been analysed, and its penalties have been allegorically shadowed forth. After this, the example of Pharaoh is held as a type of unfaith in the next section, and the Surah closed with an exhortation to faith and a declaration of the glory of Allah.

99. See they not that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, has power to create the like of them(2305) (anew)? Only He has decreed a term appointed, of which there is no doubt. But the unjust refuse (to receive it) except with ingratitude.(2306)

2305 Allah, Who created all that is in the heavens and on earth, has surely the power to receive the life of individual souls after their bodies have perished-and revive them with memories of their past life and for a continuation of their spiritual history. Only He has fixed a term for each stage of our existence, which we can neither prolong nor shorten.

2306 This phrase carries us back to 17:89. after we began the argument about the real motives for the rejection of the Qur'an by sceptics. That argument is now closed in a sort of minor circle within the major circle sketched in n. 2304 above.

100. Say: "If ye had control of the Treasures of the Mercy of my Lord, behold, ye would keep them back, for fear of spending them: for man is (ever) miserly!"(2307)

2307 A fresh argument is now addressed to those who confine Allah's revelations to a limited circle of men, such as they themselves belonged to. The reference was to the Jews, who could not understand how any Gentiles could receive revelations and guidance even superior to what they considered their own birthright. But the tendency is widespread in the human race. A particular race, or caste, or a particular kind of culture, claims to be the custodian of Allah's Message, whereas it is universal. Allah's Mercy is universal, and He scatters the priceless Treasures of His Mercy broadcast among His creatures. They are not exhausted by spending. It is only the misers who hoard their wealth for fear it should be used up by spending. 'Are you spiritual misers going to keep back Allah's holy Message from the multitude? Is that the reason why you deny the advent of the new Teacher, who comes as a Mercy to all men-to all Creation?'

101. To Moses We did give Nine Clear Sings:(2308) As the Children of Israel: when he came to them,(2309) Pharaoh said to him: "O Moses! I consider thee, indeed, to have been worked upon by sorcery!(2310)

2308 *Nine Clear Signs;* see 7:133, n. 1091. The story of Pharaoh (or a phase of it) is here told with a view to exhibiting the decline of a soul on account of pride in outward power and dignity.

2309 *To them: i.e.,* to Pharaoh, as sitting in his Council, with the Chiefs of his People. *Cf.* 7:103. The whole scene is described in some detail from the point of view of nations or Ummahs in 7:103-133.

2310 At a different and later stage in the scene, Pharaoh's Chiefs call Moses a "sorcerer well-versed" (7:109). Here Moses, who had come with Nine Signs but had not yet shown them, is reproached with being the object of sorcery: he is practically told that he is mad!

102. Moses said, "Thou knowest well that these things have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-opening(2311) evidence: and I consider thee indeed, O Pharaoh, to be one doomed to destruction!"

2311 We can well suppose Moses to ask Pharaoh to recall all the past history of Moses, for Moses had been brought up in Pharaoh's palace in all the learning of the Egyptians. He could not therefore be mad, or a simpleton worked on by Egyptian magic. What he was going to show was something far greater; it was not the deceptive magic of Pharaoh's sorcerers, but true Signs that came from Allah, the Lord of all power. They were to open the eyes of his people, and if Pharaoh resisted faith, Moses warns him that Pharaoh in that case was doomed to destruction. This is the course of the soul that sinks down by Pride! (R).

103. So he resolved to remove them(2312) from the face of the earth: but We did drown him and all who were with him.

2312 Pharaoh on this tries various subterfuges and plans for removing not only Moses but all his people by doing away with them. The detailed story is not told here but may be read in S. 7. But Allah's Wrath descended on Pharaoh and those who were with him in body and mind. The Egyptians who repented were subject to Pharaoh's wrath but were saved from the Wrath of Allah (*Cf.* 7:121-126).

104. And We said thereafter to the Children of Israel, "Dwell securely in the land(2313) (of promise)": but when the second of the warnings came to pass, We gathered you together in a mingled crowd.(2314)

2313 The Israelites were taken to the Promised Land in Palestine , and they established their own kingdom there, but they forfeited Allah's favour by their sins and backslidings and will have to answer like all souls by the laws of personal responsibility at the Day of Judgement.

2314 The *second of the warnings:* the first was probably that mentioned above, in 17:5 and the second that mentioned in 17:7 (middle). When this second warning clue to the rejection of Jesus came to pass, the Jews were gathered together in a mingled crowd. Some commentators understand the second warning to be the Day of Judgement, the Promise of the hereafter. (R).

105. We sent down the (Qur´an) in Truth, and in Truth(2315) has it descended: and We sent thee but to give Glad Tidings and to warn (sinners).(2316)

2315 The Qur'an was sent down by Allah in Truth: it was not forged by any mortal. It has descended in Truth: it was not falsified or corrupted in the process of being communicated to mankind.

2316 The part of the Prophet was that of a Messenger: he was not responsible if the ungodly rejected it. He fulfilled his mission in promulgating and explaining it and leaving it as a legacy to the world.

106. (It is) a Qur´an which We have divided (into parts from time to time), in order that thou mightest recite it to men at intervals: We have revealed it by stages.(2317)

2317 The marvel is that these parts, revealed at different times and in different circumstances, should fit together so closely and consistently as they do. All revelation is progressive. The previous revelations were also progressive. Each of them marked a stage in the world's spiritual history. Man's mind does not take in more than his spiritual state will have prepared him for. Allah's revelation comes as a light to illuminate our difficulties and show us the way in actual situations that arise.

107. Say: "Whether ye believe in it or not, it is true that those who were given(2318) knowledge beforehand, when it is recited to them, fall down on their faces in humble prostration,

2318 No one's belief or unbelief affects the beauty or grandeur of Allah's revelation. But those endowed with spiritual knowledge or insight know at once when they hear Allah's Holy Word, and fall down and adore Allah. Those endowed with knowledge include those who had received previous revelations and had kept themselves free from corrupt ideas.

108. "And they say: ´Glory to our Lord! Truly has the promise of our Lord been fulfilled!´"(2319)

2319 Those who had received previous revelations find in the Qur'an and in the Messenger who brought it, the promise of Allah fulfilled. Those who were spiritually prepared for it found in the same way the satisfaction of their spiritual yearnings: to them, also, Allah's promise was sent to be fulfilled.

109. They fall down on their faces in tears, and it increases their (earnest) humility.(2320)

2320 A feeling of earnest humility comes to the man who realises how, in spite of his own unworthiness, he is brought, by Allah's Mercy, into touch with the most sublime Truths. Such a man is touched with the deepest emotion, which finds its outlet in tears.

110. Say: "Call upon Allah, or call upon Al Rahman:(2321) by whatever name ye call upon Him, (it is well): for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.(2322) Neither speak thy Prayer aloud, nor speak it in a low tone,(2323) but seek a middle course between."

2321 *Cf.* 7:180. *Rahman* describes one of the attributes of Allah--His Grace and Mercy which come to the sinner even before he feels conscious of the need of it-the preventive Grace which saves Allah's servants from sin. See n. 19 to 1:1. Allah can be invoked, either by His simple name, which includes all attributes, or by one of the names implying the attributes by which we try to explain His nature to our limited understanding. The attribute of Mercy in *Rahman* was particularly repugnant to the Pagan Arabs (sec 25:60, and 21:36): that is why special stress is laid on it in the Qur'an. (R).

2322 *Cf.* 20:8. These Beautiful Names of Allah are many. The Hadith related by Tirmidhi, accepted by some as authentic, mentions 99 names of Allah. Qadi Muhammad Sulaiman has published an Urdu monograph on the subject, published by the Daftar Rahmatun-lil-AIamin, Patiala , India , 1930. Those who wish to see a poetic Commentary on the names in the form of stories in English may consult Sir Edwin Arnold's *Pearls of the Faith.* Sir Edwin's stories are of unequal merit, but a fine example is furnished by No. 4, *al-Malik,* "The King". (R).

2323 *Cf,* 7:205. All prayer should be pronounced with earnestness and humility, whether it is congregational prayer or the private outpouring of one's own soul. Such an attitude is not consistent with an over-loud pronunciation of the words, though in public prayers the standard of permissible loudness is naturally higher than in the case of private prayer. In public prayers, of course, the *adhan* or call to prayer will be in a loud voice to be heard near and far, but the chants from the Sacred Book should be neither so loud as to attract the hostile notice of those who do not believe nor so low in tone as not to be heard by the whole congregation.

111. Say: "Praise be to Allah, who begets no son, and has no partner in (His) dominion: Nor (needs) He any to

protect Him from humiliation:(2324) yea, magnify Him for His greatness and glory!"

<u>2324</u> A first step towards the understanding of Allah's attributes is to clear our mind from superstitions, such as that Allah begot a son, or that He has partners, or that He is dependent upon other beings to protect Him from harm and humiliation. We must realise that He is the One and Peerless. His greatness and glory are above anything we can conceive: but using our highest spiritual ideas, we must declare forth His greatness and glory. The Surah began with singing the glory and praises of Allah: it ends in the same note, concluding the argument. The next Surah takes up the same theme from another point of view, and opens with the same note, "Praise be to Allah". (R).



18. Al Kahf (The Cave)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Praise be to Allah,(2325) Who hath sent to His Servant the Book, and hath allowed therein no Crookedness:(2326)

<u>2325</u> See n. 2324 to 17:111. The theme of the last Surah, that Allah is good and worthy of all praise from His creatures, to whom He has granted a clear revelation, is continued in this Surah. The spirit of man makes gradual progress upwards, through the grace and mercy of Allah.

<u>2326</u> Some people's idea of a Sacred Book is that it should be full of mysteries-dark corners, ambiguous expressions, words so far removed from human speech that they cover anything or nothing. Pagan oracles were couched in language which suggested one meaning to the hearer and claimed to have the very opposite meaning in the light of events which actually happened subsequently. They were distinctly crooked, not straight. In the next verse, the word "Straight" *(qayyim)* is used to characterise the Qur'an, in contrast to this word "crooked" *('iwaj)*. See also 19:36, n. 2488.

2. (He hath made it) Straight(2327) (and Clear) in order that He may warn (the godless) of a terrible Punishment from Him, and that He may give Glad Tidings to the Believers who work righteous deeds, that they shall have a goodly Reward,

<u>2327</u> *Qayyim:* straight, that which has no bends and no corners to mystify people, that which speaks dearly and unambiguously, that which guides to the right path. *Cf.* 9:36. where the adjective is used for a straight usage, in contrast to usages, which tend to mystify and deceive people. The Qur'an is above all things straight, clear, and perspicuous. Its directions are plain for everyone to understand. Any book that deals with the highest mysteries of spiritual life must necessarily have portions whose full meaning is clearer to some minds than to others not so well prepared. But here there is nowhere any mystification, any desire to wrap up things in dark sayings repugnant to human reason. Allah's purpose is to give clear warnings of spiritual dangers and lead up to the highest bliss.

3. Wherein they shall remain forever:(2328)

<u>2328</u> *Cf.* 4:122, 43:71, 65:11, 98:8.

4. Further, that He may warn those (also) who say, "(Allah) hath begotten a son":(2329)

<u>2329</u> The warning is not only needed for those who deny Allah or deny His Message, but also for those whose false ideas of Allah degrade religion in supposing that Allah begot a son, for Allah is One and is High above any ideas of physical reproduction.

5. No knowledge have they of such a thing, nor had their fathers. It is a grievous thing that issues from their mouths as a saying.(2330) What they say is nothing but falsehood!

<u>2330</u> The attribution of a son "begotten" to Allah has no basis in fact or in reason. It is only a "word" or "saying" that issues out of their mouths. It is not even a dogma that is reasoned out or can be explained in any way that is consistent with the sublime attributes of Allah. (R).

6. Thou wouldst only, perchance, fret thyself to death, following after them, in grief,(2331) if they believe not in this Message.

<u>2331</u> In a reasonable world the preaching of a reasonable Faith like that of Islam would win universal acceptance. But the world is not altogether reasonable. It caused great distress to the unselfish Preacher of Islam that his Message met with so much opposition. He wanted to point the way to salvation. He only got, in the Makkan period, abuse from the chiefs of the Makkans-abuse and persecution, not only for himself but for the Truth which he was preaching. A heart less stout than his might have been appalled at what seemed the hopeless task of reclaiming the world from falsehood, superstition, selfishness, wrong, and oppression. He is here consoled, and told that he was not to fret himself to death: he was nobly doing his duty, and, as later events showed, the seed of Truth was already germinating, although this was not visible at the time. Besides, these "chiefs" and "leaders" were only strutting in false plumes: their glory was soon to fade forever.

7. That which is on earth we have made but as a glittering show for the earth,(2332) in order that We may test them - as to which of them are best in conduct.

<u>2332</u> This world's goods-worldly power, glory, wealth, position, and all that men scramble for-are but a fleeting show. The possession or want of them does not betoken a man's real value or position in the spiritual world, the world which is to endure. Yet they have their uses. They test a man's sterling quality. He who becomes their slave loses rank in the spiritual world. He who uses them if he gets them, and does not fall into despair if he does not get them, shows his true mettle and quality. His conduct proclaims him.

8. Verily what is on earth we shall make but as dust and dry soil (without growth or herbage).(2333)

<u>2333</u> The fairest sights on the earth will become as dust and waste when this earth vanishes, and the spiritual values are restored.

9. Or dost thou reflect(2334) that the Companions of the Cave(2335) and of the Inscription(2336) were wonders among Our Sign?

<u>2334</u> A wonderful story or allegory is now referred to. Its lessons are: (1) the relativity of Time, (2) the unreality of the position of oppressor and oppressed, persecutor and persecuted, on this earth, (3) the truth of the final Resurrection, when true values will be restored, and (4) the potency of Faith and Prayer to lead to the Right. Wonderful though such things may seem to be, they happen every day on Allah's earth!

2335 The unbelieving Quraysh were in the habit of putting posers to the Prophet-questions which they got from Christians and Jews, which they thought the Prophet would be unable to answer. In this way they hoped to discredit him. One of these questions was about the floating Christian legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. The prophet not only told them the main story but pointed out the the variations that were current, and rebuked men for disputing about such details (18:22). Most important, he treated the story (under inspiration) as a parable, pointing to spiritual lessons of the highest value. This is Revelation in the highest sense of the term. The story is recapitulated in n. 2337 below.

2336 *Raqim* = Inscription. So interpreted by the Jalalayn, and the majority of Commentators agree. See. n. 2337, below. Others think it was the name of the dog: see 18:18, and n. 2350 below.

10. Behold, the youths betook themselves(2337) to the Cave: they said, "Our Lord! bestow on us Mercy from Thyself, and dispose of our affair for us in the right way!"(2338)

2337 The bare Christian story (without the spiritual lessons taught in the Qur'an) is told in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (end of chapter 33). In the reign of a Roman Emperor who persecuted the Christians, seven Christian youths of Ephesus left the town and hid themselves in a cave in a mountain near by. They fell asleep, and remained asleep for some generations or centuries. When the wall which sealed up the caves was being demolished, the youths awoke. They still thought of the world in which they had previously lived. They had no idea of the duration of time. But when one of them went to the town to purchase provisions, he found that the whole world had changed. The Christian religion, instead of being persecuted was fashionable: in fact it was now the State religion. His dress and speech, and the money which he brought, seemed to belong to another world. This attracted attention. The great ones of the land visited the Cave, and verified the tale by questioning the man's Companions.

When the story became very popular and circulated throughout the Roman Empire, we may wll suppose that an Inscription was put up at the mouth of the Cave. See verse 9 and n. 2336. inscription was probably to be seen for many years afterwards, as Ephesus was a famous city on the west coast of Asia Minor, about fory to fifty miles south Smyrna. Later on, the Caliph al Wathiq (842-846 A.C.) sent an expedition to examine and identify the locality, as he did about Dhu al Qarnayn barrier in Central Asi (Appendix VI at the end of this Surah).

A popular story circulating from mouth to mouth would necessarily be vague as to dates and vary very much in details. Somewhere about the 6th century A.C. a Syriac writer reduced it to writing. He suggested that the youths were seven in number; that they went to sleep in the reign of the Emperor Decius (who reigned from 249-251 A.C., and who was a violent persecutor of Christians); and that they awoke in the reign Theodosius II, who reigned from 408 to 450 A.C. In our literature Decious is known as Daqyanus (from the adjectival Latin from Dacianus), and the name stands as a symbol of injustice and oppression, and also of things old fashioned and out-of-date, as *res decianae* must have been two to three centuries after Decius.

2338 The youths hid in the cave, but they trusted in Allah, and made over their whole case to Him in prayer. Then they apparently fell asleep and knew nothing of what was happening in the world outside.

11. Then We draw (a veil)(2339) over their ears, for a number of years, in the Cave, (so that they heard not):

2339 *Drew (a veil) over their ears: i.e.,* sealed their ears so that they heard nothing. As they were in the Cave they saw nothing. So they were completely cut off from the outer world. It was as if they had died, with their knowledge and ideas remaining at the point of time when they entered the Cave. It is as if watch stops at the exact moment of some accident, and any one taking it up afterwards can precisely fix the time of the accidents.

12. Then We roused them,(2340) in order to test which of the two parties was best(2341) at calculating the term of years they had tarried!

2340 *Roused them:* or raised them up from their sleep or whatever condition they had fallen into (18:18), so that they began to perceive the things around them, but only with the memories of the time at which they had ceased to be in touch with the world.

2341 When they awoke to consciousness, they had lost all count of time. Though they had all entered together, and lain together on the same place for the same length of time, their impressions of the time that had passed were quite different. Time is thus related to our own internal experiences. We have to learn the lesson that men as good as ourselves may yet differ as to their reactions to certain facts, and that in such matters disputes are unseemly. It is best to say, "Allah knows best" (18:19).

13. We relate to thee their story in truth: they were youths who believed in their Lord, and We advanced them in guidance:(2342)

2342 Their Faith carried them higher and higher on the road to Truth. Faith is cumulative. Each step leads higher and higher, by the grace and mercy of Allah.

14. We gave strength to their hearts:(2343) Behold, they stood up(2344) and said: "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and of the earth: never shall we call upon any god other than Him: if we did, we should indeed have uttered an enormity!

2343 So that they were not afraid to speak out openly, and protest the truth of the Unity which they clearly saw in their own minds and hearts.

2344 We may suppose them to have taken their stand and made a public protest before they betook themselves to the Cave (18:16). The story really begins at 18:13, and the verses 18:9-12 may be considered as introductory. As the emphasis is on spiritual lessons, the facts stated in the introductory part are passed over lightly in the story.

15. "These our people have taken(2345) for worship gods other than Him: why do they not bring forward an authority clear (and convincing) for what they do? Who doth more wrong than such as invent a falsehood against Allah.

2345 Besides the heathen gods, the cult of the Emperors also became fashionable in the Roman Empire in the first three centuries of the Christian Era. The statue of Diana (Artemis) at Ephesus had been one of the wonders of the ancient world. The city was a great seaport and the capital of Roman Asia. We may therefore imagine how the heathen cults must have flourished there. St. Paul spent three years preaching there, and was mobbed and assaulted, and compelled to leave (Acts, 19:1-9).

16. "When ye turn away from them and the things they worship other than Allah, betake yourselves to the Cave: Your Lord will shower His mercies on you and disposes of your affair towards comfort and ease."(2346)

2346 That is, 'do not be afraid of anything; put your whole case in the hands of Allah; at present you are being persecuted; he will solve your difficulties and give you ease and comfort'. The public protest ends at verse 15. In verse 16 they are taking counsel among themselves. After they go into the Cave, verse 17 introduces us to the scene where they are lying in the midst of the Cave in tranquil confidence in Allah.

17. Thou wouldst have seen the sun, when it rose, declining to the right(2347) from their Cave, and when it set, turning away from them to the left, while they lay in the open space in the midst of the Cave. Such are among the Signs of Allah. He whom Allah guides(2348) is rightly guided; but he whom Allah leaves to stray,- for him wilt thou find no protector to lead him to the Right Way.

2347 In the latitude of Ephesus , 38°north, *i.e.* well above the sun's northern declination, a cave opening to the north, would never have the heat of the sun within it, as the sunny side would be the south. If the youths lay on their backs with their faces looking to the north, *i.e.* towards the entrance of the Cave, the sun would rise on their right side, declining to the south, and set on their left sides leaving them cool and comfortable.

2348 The youths, having faith and trust in Allah, found safety and refuge in the Cave. They were protected from the persecution and violence of the heathen. Their prayer (18:16) was heard.

18. Thou wouldst have deemed them(2349) awake, whilst they were asleep, and We turned them on their right and on their left sides: their dog(2350) stretching forth his two fore-legs on the threshold: if thou hadst come up on to them, thou wouldst have

certainly turned back from them in flight, and wouldst certainly have been filled with terror of them.(2351)

2349 Perhaps their eyes were open, even though their senses were sealed in sleep. They turned about their sides as men do in sleep.

2350 The name of their dog is traditionally known as Qitmir, but see n. 2336 above.

2351 This graphic picture of the sleepers explains the human mechanism by which their safely was ensured by Allah from their Pagan enemies.

19. Such (being their state), we raised them up (from sleep), that they might question(2352) each other. Said one of them, "How long have ye stayed (here)?" They said, "We have stayed (perhaps) a day, or part of a day." (At length) they (all) said, "(Allah) (alone) knows best how long ye have stayed here.... Now send ye then one of you with this money of yours(2353) to the town: let him find out which is the best(2354) food (to be had) and bring some to you, that (ye may) satisfy your hunger therewith: And let him behave with care and courtesy, and let him not inform any one about you.

2352 This is the point of the story. Their own human impressions were to be compared, each with the other. They were to be made to see that with the best goodwill and the most honest enquiry they might reach different conclusions; that they were not to waste their time in vain controversies, but to get on to the main business of life; and that Allah alone had full knowledge of the things that seem to us so strange, or inconsistent, or inexplicable, or that produce different impressions on different minds. If they entered the Cave in the morning and woke up in the afternoon, one of them might think they had been there only a few hours-only part of the day. This relative or fallacious impression of Time also gives us an inkling of the state when there will be no Time, of the Resurrection when all our little impressions of this life will be corrected by the final Reality. This mystery of time had puzzled many contemplative minds. *Cf.* "Dark time that haunts us with the briefness of our days" (Thomas Wolfe in "Of Time and the River") (*Cf. n.* 2949).

2353 They now give up barren controversy and come to the practical business of life. But their thoughts are conditioned by the state of things that existed when they entered the Cave. The money they carried was the money coined in the reign of the monarch who persecuted the Religion of Unity and favoured the false cults of Paganism.

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20. "For if they should come upon you, they would stone you or force(2355) you to return to their cult, and in that case ye would never attain prosperity."(2356)

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21. Thus(2357) did We make their case known to the people, that they might know that the promise of Allah is true, and that there can be no doubt about the Hour of Judgment. Behold, they dispute among themselves(2358) as to their affair. (Some) said, "Construct a building over them": Their Lord knows best about them: those who prevailed over their affair said, "Let us surely build a place of worship over them."

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22. (Some) say they were three, the dog being the fourth among them; (others) say they were five, the dog being the sixth,- doubtfully guessing at the unknown;(2359) (yet others) say they were seven, the dog being the eighth. Say thou: "My Lord knoweth best their number; It is but few that know(2360) their (real case)." Enter not, therefore, into controversies concerning them, except on a matter that is clear,(2361) nor consult any of them about (the affair of) the Sleepers.(2362)

2359 The controversy in later ages raged about the number of the Sleepers: were they three or five or seven? People answered, nor from knowledge, but from conjecture. Gibbon's version, which has now become best known, makes the number of Sleepers seven. The point was immaterial: the real point was the spiritual lesson.

2360 The true significance of the story is known only to a few. Most men discuss futile details, which are not in their knowledge.

2361 It is unprofitable to enter such immaterial controversies, and many others that have been waged about Religion by shallow men from time immemorial. Yet, if there is a matter of clear knowledge from experience that matters, we must openly proclaim it, that the world may be brought to listen to Allah's Truth.

2362 Vulgar storymongers as such know little of the true significance of the stories and parables. We have a clear exposition in the Qur'an. What need is there to go into details of the men in the Cave, or of the time they remained there?

23. Nor say of anything, "I shall be sure to do so and so tomorrow"-

24. Without adding, "So please Allah."(2363) and call thy Lord to mind when thou forgettest, and say, "I hope that my Lord will guide me ever closer (even) than this to the right road."(2364)

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25. So they stayed in their Cave three hundred years, and (some) add nine (more)(2365)

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26. Say: "(Allah) knows best how long they stayed: with Him is (the knowledge of) the secrets of the heavens and the earth: how clearly He sees, how finely He hears (everything)! They have no protector(2366) other than Him; nor does He share His Command with any person whatsoever.(2367)

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2367 *His Command: i.e.,* Allah's government of the world, or in His Judgement on the Day of Judgement

27. And recite (and teach) what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord: none can change His Words,(2368) and none wilt thou find as a refuge other than Him.

2368 *His Words:* His Commands. Decrees. Orders.

28. And keep thy soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking(2369) His Face; and let not thine eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this Life; no obey any

whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds.(2370)

2369 *Cf.* 6:52 and n. 870. The true servants of Allah are those whose hearts are turned to Him morning, noon, and night, and who seek not worldly gain, but Allah's Grace, Allah's own Self, His presence and nearness. "Face" is the symbol of Personality or Self. Even if they are poor in this world's goods, their society gives far more inward and spiritual satisfaction than worldly grandeur or worldly attraction.

2370 For those who stray from Allah's path, Allah's Grace is ever anxious: it seeks to reclaim them and bring them back to the path. If such a one resists, and follows his own lusts, a point is reached when his case becomes hopeless. Allah's Grace does not then reach him, and he is abandoned to his pride and insolence. Beware of following the example or advice of such a one or seeking his society, or hankering after his wretched idols.

29. Say, "The truth is from your Lord": Let him who will believe, and let him who will, reject (it):(2371) for the wrong-doers We have prepared a Fire whose (smoke and flames), like the walls and roof of a tent, will hem them in: if they implore relief they will be granted water like melted brass, that will scald their faces, how dreadful the drink! How uncomfortable a couch to recline on!

2371 Our choice in our limited Free will involves a corresponding personal responsibility. We are offered the Truth: again and again it is pressed on ovir attention. If we reject it, we must take all the terrible consequences which are prefigured in the Fire of Hell. Its flames and roof will completely enclose us like a tent. Ordinarily there is water to quench the heat of thirst: here the only drink will be like molten brass, thick, heavy, burning, sizzling. Before it reaches the mouth of the unfortunates, drops of it will scald their faces as it is poured out.

30. As to those who believe and work righteousness, verily We shall not suffer to perish the reward of any who do a (single) righteous deed.(2372)

2372 The righteous will be rewarded, as has been said again and again, beyond their merits: 28:84; 30:39. Not a single good deed of theirs will lose its reward, and the mercy of Allah will blot out their sins.

31. For them will be Gardens of Eternity; beneath them rivers will flow; they will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments(2373) of fine silk and heavy brocade: They will recline therein on raised thrones. How good the recompense! How beautiful a couch to recline on!(2374)

2373 Heaven is figured by all the pictures of ease and comfort which we can imagine in our present state: Gardens: perpetual springs of crystal clear water, which we can see as in a landscape from above; the finest and most costly ornaments; the most beautiful clothes to wear; green is the colour mentioned, because it is the most refreshing to the eye, and fits in well with the Garden; the wearer takes the choice of fine silk or heavy brocade; and for rest and comfort, high thrones of dignity on which the blessed ones recline.

2374 This picture is in parallel contrast to the picture of Misery in the last verse.

32. Set forth to them the parable of two men: for one of them We provided two gardens of grape-vines and surrounded them with date palms; in between the two We placed cornfields.(2375)

2375 Here is a simple parable of the contrast between two men. One was purse-proud, and forgot that what he had was from Allah, by way of a trust and a trial in this life. The other boasted of nothing: his trust was in Allah. The worldly wealth of the first was destroyed, and he had nothing left. The second was the happier in the end.

33. Each of those gardens brought forth its produce, and failed not in the least therein: in the midst of them We caused a river to flow.

34. (Abundant) was the produce this man had : he said to his companion, in the course of a mutual argument: "more wealth have I than you, and more honour and power in (my following of) men."(2376)

2376 The two men began to compare notes. The arrogant one puffed up with his possessions, his income, and his large family and following, and thought in his self-complacency that it would last forever. He was also wrong in looking down on his Companion, who, though less affluent, was the better man of the two.

35. He went into his garden in a state (of mind) unjust to his soul:(2377) He said, "I deem not that this will ever perish,

2377 It was not wealth that ruined him, but the attitude of his mind. He was unjust, not so much to his neighbour, as to his own soul. In his love of the material, he forgot or openly defied the spiritual. As verse 37 shows, he took his companion with him, to impress him with his own importance, but the companion was unmoved.

36. "Nor do I deem that the Hour (of Judgment) will (ever) come: Even if I am brought back to my Lord, I shall surely find (there) something better in exchange."(2378)

2378 Here conies out the grasping spirit of the materialist. In his mind "better" means more wealth and more power, of the kind he was enjoying in this life, although in reality, even what he had rested on hollow foundations and was doomed to perish and bring him down with it.

37. His companion said to him, in the course of the argument with him: "Dost thou deny Him Who created thee out of dust, then out of a sperm-drop, then fashioned thee into a man?(2379)

2379 Three stages of man's creation: first dust, or clay, itself created out of nothing and forming the physical basis for his body; then, out of the produce of the earth as incorporated in the parent's body, the sperm drop (with the corresponding receptive element); and then when the different elements were mixed in due proportion, and the soul was breathed into him, the fashioned man. *(Cf.* 15:28-29, 30:20, 35:11, and 87:2).

38. "But (I think) for my part that He is Allah, My Lord, and none shall I associate with my Lord.

39. "Why didst thou not, as thou wentest into thy garden, say: ´(Allah)´s will (be done)! There is no power but with Allah.´ If thou(2380) dost see me less than thee in wealth and sons,

2380 The companion's argument divides itself into five parts. (1) He remonstrates against the proud man denying Allah. (2) He, from his own spiritual experience, proclaims that Allah is One and that He is good. (3) He points out to him the better way of enjoying Allah's gift, with gratitude to Him. (4) He expresses contentment and satisfaction in Allah's dealings with him. (5) He gives warning of the fleeting nature of this world's goods and the certainty of Allah's punishment for inordinate vanity.

40. "It may be that my Lord will give me something better than thy garden, and that He will send on thy garden thunderbolts (by way of reckoning) from heaven, making it (but) slippery sand!(2381)-

2381 The punishment, was that of thunderbolts *(husbanan), but* the general meaning of the; word includes any punishment by way of a reckoning *(hisab),* and I think that an earthquake is also implied, as it alters watercourses, diverts channels underground, throws up silt and sand, and covers large areas with ruin. (R).

41. "Or the water of the garden will run off underground so that thou wilt never be able to find it."

42. So his fruits (and enjoyment) were encompassed (with ruin), and he remained twisting and turning his hands over what he had spent(2382) on his property, which had (now) tumbled to pieces to its very

foundations, and he could only say, "Woe is me! Would I had never ascribed partners to my Lord and Cherisher!"(2383)

2382 "Fruits", "spent", "twisting of the hands", should all be understood in a wide metaphorical sense, as well as the literal sense. He had great income and satisfaction, which were all gone. What resources he had lavished on his property! His thoughts had been engrossed on it; his hopes had been built on it; it had become the absorbing passion of his life, if he had only looked to Allah, instead of to the ephemeral goods of this world!

2383 In this case, in his mind, there was his own Self and his Mammon as rivals to Allah!

43. Nor had he numbers to help him against Allah, nor was he able to deliver himself.(2384)

2384 He had built up connections and obligated dependents, and was proud of having his "quiver full". But where were all things when the reckoning came? He could not help himself; how could others be expected to help him!

44. There, the (only) protection comes from Allah, the True One. He is the Best to reward, and the Best to give success.(2385)

2385 All else is vanity, uncertainty, the sport of Time. The only hope or until is from Allah. Other rewards, and other success are illusory; the best Reward and the best Success come from Allah.

45. Set forth to them the similitude of the life of this world: It is like the rain which we send down from the skies: the earth´s vegetation absorbs it, but soon it becomes dry stubble, which the winds(2386) do scatter: it is (only) Allah who prevails over all things.

2386 Rainwater is a good thing in and of itself, but it does not last, and you can build no solid foundations on it. It is soon absorbed in the earth, and produces the flourishing appearance of grass and vegetation- for a time. Soon these decay, and become as dry stubble, which the least wind from any quarter will blow about like a thing of no importance. The water is gone, and so is the vegetation to which it lent a brave show of luxuriance temporarily. Such is the life of *this* world, contrasted with the inner and real Life, which looks to the Hereafter. Allah is the only enduring Power we can look to, supreme over all.

46. Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world: But the things that endure, good deeds, are best in the sight of thy Lord, as rewards, and best as (the foundation for) hopes.(2387)

2387 Other things are fleeting: but Good Deeds have a lasting value in the sight of Allah. They are best as (or for) rewards in two ways: (1) they flow from us by the Grace of Allah, and are themselves rewards for our Faith; (2) they become the foundation of our hopes for the highest spiritual rewards in the Hereafter *(Cf.* 19:76).

47. One Day We shall remove the mountains, and thou wilt see the earth as a level stretch,(2388) and We shall gather them, all together, nor shall We leave out any one of them.

2388 On the Day of Judgement none of our present landmarks will remain.

48. And they will be marshalled before thy Lord in ranks, (with the announcement), "Now have ye come to Us (bare) as We created you(2389) first: aye, ye thought We shall not fulfil the appointment made to you to meet (Us)!":(2390)

2389 We shall stand as we were created, with none of the adventitious possessions that we collected in this life, which will all have vanished.

2390 The sceptics will now at length be convinced of the Reality which be upon them.

49. And the Book (of Deeds) will be placed (before you); and thou wilt see the sinful in great terror because of what is (recorded) therein; they will say, "Ah! woe to us! what a Book is this! It leaves out nothing small or great, but takes account thereof!" They will find all that they did, placed before them: And not one will thy Lord treat with injustice.(2391)

2391 Personal responsibility, for all deeds in this life, will then be enforced. But it will be done with perfect justice. Expressed in the forms of this world, it will amount to a clear statement of all we did in this life: the record will be put before us to convince us. As it will be a perfect record, with no omissions and no wrong entries, it will be perfectly convincing. Where there is punishment, it has been earned by the wrongdoer's own deeds, not imposed on him unjustly.

50. Behold! We said to the angels, "Bow down(2392) to Adam": They bowed down except Iblis. He was one of the Jinns,(2393) and he broke the Command of his Lord. Will ye then take him and his progeny(2394) as protectors rather than Me? And they are enemies to you! Evil would be the exchange(2395) for the wrong-doers!

2392 *Cf.* 2:34, where the story is told of the fall of mankind through Adam. Here the point is referred to in order to bring home the individual responsibility of the erring soul. Iblis is your enemy: you have been told his history; will you prefer to go to him rather than to the merciful Allah, your Creator and Cherisher? What a false exchange you would make!'

2393 *Cf.* 6:100, n. 929.

2394 *Satan's progeny,* we need not take the epithet only in a literal sense. All his followers are also his progeny. (R).

2395 Out of the limited free-will that man has, if he were to choose Evil instead of Good, Satan instead of Allah, what a dreadful choice it would be! It would really be an evil exchange. For man is Allah's creature, cared for and cherished by Him. He abandons his Cherisher to become the slave of his enemy!

51. I called them not to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor (even) their own creation: nor is it for helpers such as Me to take as lead (men) astray!(2396)

2396 Allah wants man's good: how can He take Evil for His partner?

52. One Day He will say, "Call on those whom ye thought to be My partners," and they will call on them, but they will not listen to them; and We shall make for them a place of common perdition.(2397)

2397 Some Commentators construe: "And We shall make a partition between them": *i.e.,* the Evil ones will not even be seen by their misguided followers, much as the latter may go on calling on them.

53. And the Sinful shall see the fire and apprehend that they have to fall therein: no means will they find to turn away therefrom.

54. We have explained in detail in this Qur´an, for the benefit of mankind, every kind of similitude: but man is, in most things,(2398) contentious.

2398 If men had not cultivated the habit of contention and obstinacy, they would have found that the parables and similitudes of Scripture had fully met their difficulties, and they would gladly have obeyed the call of Mali .

55. And what is there to keep back men from believing, now that Guidance has come to them, nor from praying for forgiveness from their Lord, but that (they ask that) the ways of the ancients be repeated(2399) with them, or the Wrath be brought to them face to face?

2399 But man's obstinacy or contrariness asks or calls for a repetition of what happened to the wicked and those who rejected Faith in ancient times. Out of curiosity, or by way of challenge, they seem to court the Punishment and ask that it be brought to pass at once. But it will come soon enough, and then they will think it too early! *(Cf.* 13:6 and n. 1810, and 27:46).

56. We only send the messengers to give Glad Tidings and to give warnings:(2400) But the unbelievers dispute with vain argument, in order therewith to weaken the truth, and they treat My Signs as a jest, as also the fact that they are warned!

2400 The Prophets of Allah are not sent to humour us with dialectics or satisfy the vulgar curiosity for miracles of dark unusual things. There is no "crookedness" (18:1) in their preaching. They come to preach the Truth-not in an abstract way, but with special reference to our conduct. They give us the good news of salvation lest we despair in the presence of Sin, and to warn us clearly of the dangers of Evil. Vain controversies about words only weaken their mission, or turn it into ridicule. The ungodly have a trick also of treating the earnest preaching to them itself as a jest and ridicule it. (R).

57. And who doth more wrong than one who is reminded of the Signs of his Lord, but turns away from them, forgetting the (deeds) which his hands(2401) have sent forth? Verily We have set veils over their hearts lest they should understand this, and over their ears, deafness, if thou callest them to guidance, even then will they never accept guidance.

2401 Considering the power of sin, and how it gets hold of the hearts of men, and considering all the wrongs that men have done, it is the height of folly and injustice on their part to turn away from warnings which are given expressly for their good. But a stage of callousness is reached, when, by their own choice, they have rendered themselves impervious to Allah's Grace. At that stage a veil is put over their hearts and they are left alone for a time, that they may commune with themselves and perhaps repent and seek Allah's Mercy again. If they do not, it is their own loss. See next verse.

58. But your Lord is Most forgiving, full of Mercy. If He were to call them (at once) to account for what they have earned, then surely He would have earned, then surely He would have hastened their punishment: but they have their appointed time, beyond which(2402) they will find no refuge.

2402 Min *duni hi:* should we take the pronoun to refer to "the appointed time", or to "your Lord," mentioned at the beginning of the verse? Most Commentators take the former view, and I have translated accordingly. But I agree with those who take the latter view, and the better translation would be: "But they have their appointed time, and except with Allah, they will find no refuge." That means that even during the period allowed them, when they are left to wander astray as they have rejected Allah's Grace, Allah's Mercy is open to them if they will repent and return; but nothing but Allah's Mercy can save them.

59. Such were the populations we destroyed when they committed iniquities; but we fixed an appointed time for their destruction.(2403)

2403 The instances of exemplary Punishment in former times were also subject to this rule, that Allah gives plenty of rope to the wicked, in case they might turn, repent, and obtain His Mercy.

60. Behold, Moses said(2404) to his attendant, "I will not give up until I reach the junction of the two(2405) seas or (until) I spend years and years in travel."(2406)

2404 This episode in the story of Moses is meant to illustrate four points. (1) Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Even so that wisdom did not comprehend everything, even as the whole stock of the knowledge of the present day, the sciences and the arts, and in literature, (if it could be supposed to be gathered in one individual), does not include all knowledge. Divine knowledge, as far as man is concerned, is unlimited. Even after Moses received his divine mission, his knowledge was not so perfect that it could not receive further additions. (2) Constant effort is necessary to keep our knowledge square with the march of time, and such effort Moses is shown to be making. (3) The mysterious man he meets (18:65 and n. 2411), to whom Tradition assigns the name of *Khidr* (literally, Green), is the type of that knowledge which is ever in contact with life as it is actually lived. (4) There are paradoxes in life: apparent loss may be real gain; apparent cruelty maybe real mercy; returning good for evil may really be justice and not generosity (18:79-82). Allah's wisdom transcends all human calculation. (R).

2405 The most probable geographical location (if any is required in a story that is a parable) is where the two arms of the Red Sea join together, *viz., the* Gulf of 'Aqabah and the Gulf of Suez. They enclose the Sinai Peninsula , in which Moses and the Israelites spent many years in their wanderings. There is also authority (see Baydawf's note) for interpreting the two seas as the two great streams of knowledge, which were to meet in the persons of Moses and Khidr.

2406 *Huqub* means a long but indefinite space of time. Sometimes it is limited to 80 years.

61. But when they reached the Junction,(2407) they forgot (about) their Fish,(2408) which took its course through the sea (straight) as in a tunnel.

2407 Literally, 'the Junction of (the space) between the two,' *i e.,* the point at which the two seas were united.

2408 Moses was to go and find a servant of Allah, who would instruct him in such knowledge as he had not already got. He was to take a fish with him. The place where he was to meet his mysterious Teacher would be indicated by the fact that the fish would disappear when he got to that place. The fish is the emblem of the fruit of secular knowledge, which merges itself in divine knowledge at the point where human intelligence is ready for the junction of the two. But the mere merger of secular knowledge does not in itself produce divine knowledge- The latter has to be sought patiently.

62. When they had passed on (some distance), Moses said to his attendant: "Bring us our early meal; truly we have suffered much fatigue(2409) at this (stage of) our journey."

2409 When they came to the Junction of the Seas, Moses forgot about the fish, and his attendant forgot to tell him of the fact that he had seen the fish escaping into the sea in a marvellous way. They passed on, but the stages now became heavier and heavier, and more fatiguing to Moses. So when our old knowledge is exhausted, and we come to the brink of new knowledge, we have a feeling of strangeness, heaviness, and difficulty, especially when we want to pass the new knowledge by and do not make it our own. Some refreshment even if it be in our old traditional way, is required to sustain us. But we must retrace our steps, and seek the accredited repository of the knowledge which is our quest. It is our business to seek him out. We shall not find him without effort.

63. He replied: "Sawest thou (what happened) when we betook ourselves to the rock? I did indeed forget (about) the Fish: none but Satan made me forget to tell (you) about it:(2410) it took its course through the sea in a marvellous way!"

2410 The attendant actually saw the fish swimming away in the sea, and yet "forgot" to tell his master. In his case the "forgetting" was more than forgetting. Inertia had made him refrain from telling the important news. In such matters inertia is almost as bad as active spite, the suggestion of Satan. So new knowledge or spiritual knowledge is not only passed by in ignorance, but sometimes by culpable negligence.

64. Moses said: "That was what we were seeking after:" So they went back on their footsteps, following (the path they had come).

65. So they found one(2411) of Our servants, on whom We had bestowed Mercy from Ourselves and whom We had taught knowledge from Our own(2412) Presence.

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66. Moses said to him: "May I follow thee, on the footing that thou teach me something of the (Higher) Truth which thou hast been taught?"(2413)

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67. (The other) said: "Verily thou wilt not be able to have patience with me!"(2414)

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68. "And how canst thou have patience about things about which thy understanding is not complete?"(2415)

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69. Moses said: "Thou wilt find me, if Allah so will, (truly) patient: nor shall I disobey thee in aught."(2416)

2416 Moses had Faith. He adopts the true attitude of the learner to the Teacher, and promises to obey in all things, with the help of Allah. The Teacher is doubtful, but permits him to follow him on condition that he asks no questions about anything until the Teacher himself mentions it first.

70. The other said: "If then thou wouldst follow me, ask me no questions about anything until I myself speak to thee concerning it."

71. So they both proceeded: until, when they were in the boat, he scuttled it.(2417) Said Moses: "Hast thou scuttled it in order to drown those in it? Truly a strange thing hast thou done!"

2417 The explanation follows in 18:79.

72. He answered: "Did I not tell thee that thou canst have no patience with me?"

73. Moses said: "Rebuke me not for forgetting, nor grieve me by raising difficulties in my case."

74. Then they proceeded: until, when they met a young man, he slew him.(2418) Moses said: "Hast thou slain an innocent person who had slain none? Truly a foul (unheard of) thing hast thou done!"

2418 The explanation follows in 18:80-81.

75. He answered: "Did I not tell thee that thou canst have no patience with me?"

76. (Moses) said: "If ever I ask thee about anything after this, keep me not in thy company: then wouldst thou have received (full) excuse from my side."

77. Then they proceeded: until, when they came to the inhabitants of a town, they asked them for food, but they refused them(2419) hospitality. They found there a wall on the point of falling down, but he set it up straight. (Moses) said: "If thou hadst wished, surely thou couldst have exacted some recompense for it!"(2420)

2419 The inhabitants were churlish. They broke the universal Eastern rule of hospitality to strangers, and thus showed themselves beyond the pale of ordinary human courtesies. Note that they would have been expected to *offer* hospitality of themselves, unasked. Here Moses and his companion actually had to ask for hospitality and were refused point-blank.

2420 As they were refused hospitality, they should, as self-respecting men, have shaken the dust of the town off their feet, or shown their indignation in some way. Instead of that, Khidr actually goes and does a benevolent act. He rebuilds for them a falling wall, and never asks for any compensation for it. Perhaps he employed local workman for it and paid them wages, thus actually benefiting a town which had treated him and his companion so shabbily! Moses is naturally surprised and asks, "Could you not at least have asked for the cost?"

78. He answered: "This is the parting between me and thee: now will I tell thee the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience.(2421)

2421 The story and the interpretation are given with the greatest economy of words. It would repay us to search for the meaning in terms of our own inner and outer experience.

79. "As for the boat, it belonged to certain men in dire want: they plied on the water: I but wished to render it unserviceable, for there was after them a certain king who seized on every boat by force.(2422)

2422 They went on the boat, which was plying for hire. Its owners were not even ordinary men who plied for trade. They had been reduced to great poverty, perhaps from affluent circumstances, and deserved great commiseration, the more so as they preferred an honest calling to begging for chanty. They did not know, but Khidr did, that the boat, perhaps a new one, had been marked down to be commandeered by an unjust king who seized on every boat he could get-it may have been, for warlike purposes. If this boat had been taken away from these self-respecting men, they would have been reduced to beggary, with no resources left them. By a simple act of making it unseaworthy, the boat was saved from seizure. The owners could repair it as soon as the danger was past. Khidr probably paid liberally in fares, and what seemed an unaccountably cruel act was the greatest act of kindness he could do in the circumstances.

80. "As for the youth, his parents were people of Faith, and we feared that he would grieve them by obstinate rebellion and ingratitude (to Allah and man).(2423)

2423 This seemed at first sight even a more cruel act than scuttling the boat. But the danger was also greater. Khidr knew that the youth was a potential parricide. His parents were worthy, pious people, who had brought him up with love. He had apparently gone wrong. Perhaps he had already been guilty of murders and robberies and had escaped the law by subtleties and fraud. See next note.

81. "So we desired that their Lord would give them in exchange (a son) better in purity (of conduct) and closer in affection.(2424)

2424 The son was practically an outlaw-a danger to the public and a particular source of grief to his righteous parents. Even so, his summary capital punishment would have been unjustified if Khidr had been acting on his own. But Khidr was not acting on his own: see the latter part of the next verse. The plural "we" also implies that he was not acting on his own. He was acting on higher authority and removing a public scourge, who was also a source of extreme sorrow and humiliation to his parents. His parents are promised a better-behaved son who would love them and be a credit to them.

82. "As for the wall, it belonged to two youths, orphans, in the Town; there was, beneath it, a buried treasure, to which they were entitled: their father had been a righteous man:(2425) So thy Lord desired that they should attain their age(2426) of full strength and get out their treasure - a mercy (and favour) from thy Lord. I did it not of my own(2427) accord. Such is the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience."

2425 The wall was in a ruinous state. If it had fallen, the treasure buried beneath it would have been exposed and would certainly have been looted, among so churlish and selfish a people. See n. 2419 above. The treasure had been collected and buried by a righteous man. It was not, in any sense of the word, ill-gotten gains: it was buried expressly in the interests of the orphans by their father before his death. It was intended that the orphans should grow up and safely take possession of their heritage. It was also expected that they would be righteous men like their father, and use the treasure in good works and in advancing righteousness among an otherwise wicked community. There was thus both public and private interests involved in all the three incidents. In the second incident Khidr uses the word "we", showing that he was associating in his act the public authorities of the place, who had been eluded by the outlaw.

2426 *Age of full strength: Cf.* 17:34 and n. 2218.

2427 Those who act, not from a whim or a private impulse of" their own, but from higher authority, have to bear the blame, with the vulgar crowd, for acts of the greater wisdom and utility. In human affairs many things are inexplicable, which are things of the highest wisdom in the Universal Plan.

83. They ask thee concerning Dhu al Qarnayn.(2428) Say, "I will rehearse to you something of his story."

2428 Literally, "the Two-horned One", the King with the Two Horns, or the Lord of the Two Epochs. Who was he? In what age, and where did he live? The Qur'an gives us no material on which we can base a positive answer. Nor is it necessary to find an answer, as the story is treated as a Parable. Popular opinion identifies Dhu al Qarnayn with Alexander the Great. An alternative suggestion is an ancient Persian King, or a prehistoric Himyarite King. See a brief account of the controversy in Appendix VI printed at the end of this Surah. Dhu al Qarnayn was a most powerful king, but it was Allah, Who, in His universal Plan, gave him power and provided him with the ways and means for his great work. His sway extended over East and West, and over people of diverse civilisations. He was just and righteous, not selfish or grasping. He protected the weak and punished the unlawful arid the turbulent. Three of his expeditions are described in the text, each embodying a great ethical idea involved in the possession of kingship or power.

84. Verily We established his power on earth, and We gave him the ways and the means to all ends.(2429)

2429 Great was his power and great were his opportunities ("ways and means"), which he used for justice and righteousness. But he recognised that his power and opportunities were given to him as a trust by Allah. He had faith, and did not forget Allah.

85. One (such) way he followed,

86. Until, when he reached the setting of the sun,(2430) he found it set in a spring of murky water: Near it he found a People: We said: "O Zul-qarnain! (thou hast authority,) either to punish them, or to treat them with kindness."(2431)

2430 This is the first of the three episodes here mentioned, his expedition to the west. "Reaching the setting of the sun" does not mean the extreme west, for there is no such thing. West and East are relative terms. It means a western expedition terminated by a "spring of murky water." This has puzzled Commentators, and they have understood this to mean the dark, tempestuous sea. If Dhu al Qarnayn is Alexander the Great, the reference is easily understood to be the Lychnitis (now Ochrida), west of Macedonia . It is fed entirely by underground springs in a limestone region, where the water is never very clear. (See Appendix VI at the end of the Surah).

2431 He had great power and great opportunity. He got authority over a turbulent and unruly people. Was he going to be severe with them and chastise them, or was he going to seek peace at any price, *i.e.,* to wink at violence and injustice so long as it did not affect his power? He chose the better course, as described in the next verse. To protect the weak and the innocent, he punished the guilty and the headstrong, but he remembered always that the true Punishment would come in the Hereafter-the true and final justice before the throne of Allah.

87. He said: "Whoever doth wrong, him shall we punish; then shall he be sent back(2432) to his Lord; and He will punish him with a punishment unheard-of (before).

2432 Though most powerful among kings, he remembered that his power was but human, and given by Allah. His punishments were but tentative, to preserve the balance of this life as he could appraise it. Even if his punishment was capital ("wrongdoer sent bad to his Lord") it was nothing compared to the dire consequences of sin, in the final Justice of Allah.

88. "But whoever believes, and works righteousness,- he shall have a goodly reward, and easy will be his task as We order it by our Command."(2433)

2433 He never said like Pharaoh, "I am your Lord Most High!" (79:24). On the contrary, his punishments were humbly regulated as not being final, and he laid more stress on the good he could do to those who lived normal lives in faith and righteousness. His rule was easy to them: he imposed no heavy tasks because of his power, but gave every opportunity to rich and poor for the exercise of virtue and goodness. Such is the spiritual lesson to be learned from the first episode.

89. Then followed he (another) way,

90. Until, when he came to the rising of the sun,(2434) he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no covering protection(2435) against the sun.

2434 We now come to the second episode. This is an expedition to the east. "Rising of the sun" has a meaning corresponding to "setting of the sun" in 18:86. as explained in n. 2430.

2435 The people here lived very simple lives. Perhaps the climate was hot, and they required neither roofs over their heads, nor much clothing to protect them from the sun. What did he do with them? See next note.

91. (He left them) as they were: We completely understood what was before him.(2436)

2436 They were a primitive people. He did not fuss over their primitiveness, but left them in the enjoyment of peace and tranquillity in their own way. In this he was wise. Power is apt to be intolerant and arrogant, and to interfere in everything that does not accord with its own glorification. Not so Dhu al Qarnayn. He recognised his own limitations in the sight of Allah: man never completely understands his own position, but if he devoutly looks to Allah, he will live and let live. This is the spiritual lesson from the second episode.

92. Then followed he (another) way,

93. Until, when he reached (a tract) between two mountains,(2437) he found, beneath them, a people who scarcely understood a word.(2438)

2437 The geography of the place (if geography is relevant in a parable story) is discussed in Appendix VI at the end of this Surah *(Cf.* 21:96).

2438 It does not mean that they had no speech. It means that they did not understand the speech of the Conqueror. But they had parleys with him (through interpreters), as is evident from the verses following (18:94-98).

94. They said: "O Zul-qarnain! the Gog and Magog (people)(2439) do great mischief on earth: shall we then render thee tribute in order that thou mightest erect a barrier between us and them?

2439 Who were the Gog and Magog people? This question is connected with the question, who was Dhu al Qarnayn? Some discussion on the question will be found in Appendix VI at the end of this Surah.

What we are mainly concerned with is the spiritual interpretation. The Conqueror had now arrived among a people who were different in speech and race from him, but not quite primitive, for they were skilled in the working of metals, and could furnish blocks (or bricks) of iron, melt metals with bellows or blowpipes, and prepare molten lead (18:96). Apparently they were a peaceable and industrious race, much subject to incursions from wild tribes who are called Gog and Magog. Against these tribes they were willing to purchase immunity by paying the Conqueror tribute in return for protection. The permanent protection they wanted was the closing of a mountain gap through which the incursions were made.

95. He said: "(The power) in which my Lord has established me is better (than tribute):(2440) Help me therefore with strength (and labour): I will erect a strong barrier between you and them:

2440 Dhu al Qarnayn was not greedy and did not want to impose a tribute to be carried away from an industrious population. He understood the power which Allah had given him, to involve duties and responsibilities on his part-the duty of protecting his subjects without imposing too heavy a taxation on them. He would provide the motive force and organising skill. Would they obey him and provide the material and labour, so that they could close the gap with a strong barrier, probably with well-secured gates? The word *radm,* translated "Barrier," does not necessarily mean a wall, but radier suggests a blocked door or entrance.

96. "Bring me blocks of iron."(2441) At length, when he had filled up the space between the two steep mountain-sides, He said, "Blow (with your bellows)" Then, when he had made(2442) it (red) as fire, he said: "Bring me, that I may pour over it, molten lead."

2441 I understand the defences erected to have been a strong barrier of iron, with iron Gates. The jambs of the Gates were constructed with blocks or bricks of iron,

and the interstices filled up with molten lead, so as to form an impregnable mass of metal. It may be that there was a stone wall also, but that is not mentioned. There was none in the Iron Gate near Bukhara ; see Appendix VI at the end of his Surah.

2442 *Made it (red) as fire,* what does "it" refer to? Probably to the iron, either in sheets or blocks, to be welded with molten lead.

97. Thus were they made powerless to scale it or to dig through it.(2443)

2443 The iron wall and gates and towers were sufficiently high to prevent their being scaled and sufficiently strong with welded metal to resist any attempt to dig through them.

98. He said: "This is a mercy from my Lord:(2444) But when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will make it into dust; and the promise of my Lord is true."

2444 After all the effort which Dhu al Qarnayn has made for their protection, he claims no credit for himself beyond that of discharging his duty as a ruler. He turns their attention to Allah, Who has provided the ways and means by which they can be helped and protected. But all such human precautions are apt to become futile. The time must come when they will crumble into dust. Allah has said so in His Revelation; and His word is true.

And so the spiritual lesson from the third episode is: Take human precautions and do all in your power to protect yourselves from evil. But no protection is complete unless you seek the help and grace of Allah. The best of our precautions must crumble to dust when the appointed Day arrives.

99. On that day We shall leave them to surge like waves on one another:(2445) the trumpet will be blown, and We shall collect them all together.

2445 And so we pass on to the Last Days before the Great Summons comes from Allah. All human barriers will be swept away. There will be tumultuous rushes. The Trumpet will be blown, and the Judgement will be set on foot.

100. And We shall present Hell that day for Unbelievers to see, all spread out,-(2446)

2446 If men had scoffed at Faith and the Hereafter, their eyes will be opened now, and they will see the terrible Reality.

101. (Unbelievers) whose eyes had been under a veil from remembrance of Me, and who had been unable even to hear.(2447)

2447 Those very men who refused to see the many Signs of Allah which in this world convey His Message and to hear the Word of the Lord when it came to them, will then see without any mistake the consequences fully brought up before them.

102. Do the Unbelievers think that they can take My servants as protectors besides Me? Verily We have prepared Hell for the Unbelievers for (their) entertainment.

103. Say: "Shall we tell you of those who lose most in respect of their deeds?-(2448)

2448 That is, those who prided themselves on their works in this life, and now find that those works are of no avail. Their loss is all the greater because they had a misplaced confidence in their own deeds or in the assistance of false "protectors". Allah is the only Protector: no one else's protection is of any use.

104. "Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, while they thought that they were acquiring good by their works?"(2449)

2449 Many people have such a smug sense of self-righteousness that while they go on doing wrong, they think that they are acquiring merit. So, in charity, all the elements that make for outward show or selfishness (as to get some worldly advantage) nullify the deed of charity. In the same way, hypocrites sometimes affect to be surprised that their declared effort for somebody's good is not appreciated, when they are really seeking some hidden gain or false glory for themselves. The sincere are only those who believe in their spiritual responsibility and act in Allah's sight.

105. They are those who deny the Signs of their Lord and the fact of their having to meet Him (in the Hereafter): vain will be their works, nor shall We, on the Day of Judgment, give them any Weight.(2450)

2450 What weight can be attached to works behind which the motives are not pure, or are positively evil? They are either wasted or count against those who seek to pass them off as meritorious!

106. That is their reward, Hell, because they rejected Faith, and took My Signs and My Messengers by way of jest.(2451)

2451 False motives, pretence, deception, and hypocrisy, flourish because people do not take the higher life seriously. Tn effect they treat it as ajest. Signs and Messengers are sent as a special and personal Mercy from Allah, and for such things the first person singular is used as in this verse, even when it involves a sudden transition from the first person plural as in the last verse.

107. As to those who believe and work righteous deeds, they have, for their entertainment, the Gardens of Paradise,(2452)

2452 *Firdaws* in Persian means an enclosed place, a park. In technical theological language the word is used for the inner circle of Heaven, or the highest Heaven, the destination of those who perfectly fulfil both requirements, *viz.:* a sound faith, and perfectly righteous conduct. Small faults in either respect are forgiven; the Mercy of Allah steps in. (R).

108. Wherein they shall dwell (for aye): no change will they wish for from them.

109. Say: "If the ocean were ink (wherewith to write out) the words of my Lord,(2453) sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord, even if we added another ocean like it, for its aid."

2453 The Words and Signs and Mercies of Allah are in all Creation, and can never be fully set out in human language, however extended our means may be imagined to be.

110. Say: "I am but a man like yourselves, (but) the inspiration has come to me, that your Allah is one Allah. whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and, in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as partner.(2454)

2454 Righteousness and true respect for Allah-which excludes the worship of anything else, whether idols, or deified men, or forces of nature, or faculties of man, or Self-these are the criteria of true worship.

19. Maryam (Mary)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Kaf. Ha. Ya. ´Ain. Sad.(2455)

2455 This is the only Surah which begins with these five Abbreviated Letters, *Kaf, Ha Ya 'Ayn, Sad.* For Abbreviated Letters generally, see Appendix I.

As stated in my note 25, such Letters are Symbols, of which the true meaning is known to Allah alone. We should not be dogmatic about any conjectures that we make. According to the interpretation of the last letter *Sad,* suggested in n. 989 to 7:1. I should be disposed to accept Sad with the meaning of *Qisas, i.e.,* stories of the Prophets. The main figures referred to here are: Zakariya, Yahya, Maryam, Isa, and Ibrahim: the others are mentioned but incidentally. The strong letter in Zakariya, is K; in IbraHim. H; in YahYa and perhaps MarYam, Y; and in Isa,—A *('Ayn).* H also comes in Harun (Aaron), and the Arabic *Ya* 'comes in all the names including Isma'il and Idris. I offer this suggestion with some diffidence. The suggestion of the *Tafsir Kabir* is that the letters stand for attributes of Allah: K for *Kafi* (the One sufficient in Himself); H. for *Hadi* (He who guides); Y. for *Yad* (Hand as a symbol of Power and Authority; *Cf.* 48;10, "The Hand of Allah is above their hands"); 'A- for ' *Alim* (the All-Knowing); and S for *Sadiq* (The True One).

2. (This is) a recital(2456) of the Mercy of thy Lord to His servant Zakariya.

2456 The Mercy of Allah to Zakariya was shown in many ways: (1) in the acceptance of his prayer; (2) in bestowing a son like Yahya; and (3) in the love between father and son, in addition to the work which Yahya did as Allah's Messenger for the world. *Cf.* 3:38-41 and notes. There the public ministry was the point stressed; here the beautiful relations between the son and the father.

3. Behold! he cried to his Lord in secret,(2457)

2457 *In secret:* because he feared that his own family and relatives were going wrong (19:5), and he wanted to keep the lamp of Allah burning bright. He could not very well mention the fear about his colleagues (who were his relations) in public.

4. Praying: "O my Lord! infirm indeed are my bones, and the hair of my head doth glisten with grey: but never am I unblest, O my Lord, in my prayer(2458) to Thee!

2458 This preface shows the fervent faith of Zakariya. Zakariya was a priest of the Most High Allah. His office was the Temple , and his relatives were his colleagues. But he found in them no true spirit of the service of Allah and man. He was filled with anxiety as to who would uphold the godly ideas he had in mind, which were strange to his worldly colleagues.

5. "Now I fear (what) my relatives (and colleagues) (will do) after me: but my wife is barren: so give me an heir(2459) as from Thyself,-

2459 His was not merely a vulgar desire for a son. If it had been, he would have prayed much earlier in his life, when he was a young man. He was too full of true piety to put merely selfish things into his prayers. But here was a public need, in the service of the Lord. He was too old, but could he perhaps adopt a child-who would be an heir "as from Allah?" (See n. 380 to 3:38).

6. "(One that) will (truly) represent me, and represent(2460) the posterity of Jacob; and make him, O my Lord! one with whom Thou art well-pleased!"

2460 It is true that, an heir inherits property, but his higher duty is to represent in everything the personality of him from whom he inherits. It is doubtful whether Zakariya had any worldly property. But he had character and virtue, as a man of God, and this he wanted to transmit to his heir as his most precious possession. It was almost the most precious possession of the posterity of Jacob. The people around him had fallen away from Allah's Message. Could his heir, like him, try and renew it?

7. (His prayer was answered): "O Zakariya! We give thee good news of a son: His name shall be Yahya: on none by that name have We conferred distinction before."(2461)

2461 This was John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. In accordance with his father's prayer he, and Jesus for whom he prepared the way, renewed the Message of Allah, which had been corrupted and lost among the Israelites. The Arabic form Yahya suggests "Life". The Hebrew form is Johanan, which means "Jehovah has been Gracious". *Cf. Hanana* in verse 13 below. It does not mean that the name was given for the first time, for we read of a Johanan the son of Careah in II Kings, 25:23, an otherwise obscure man. It means that Allah had, for the first time, called one of His elect by that name.

8. He said: "O my Lord! How shall I have a son, when my wife is barren and I have grown quite decrepit from old age?"

9. He said: "So (it will be):(2462) Thy Lord saith, ´That is easy for Me: I did indeed create thee before, when thou hadst been nothing!´"(2463)

2462 Who is the "He" in this clause? As I have construed it, following the majority of Commentators, it means the angel who brought the message from Allah. *Cf.* 19:21 below. But some Commentators construe it to refer to Zakariya. In that case the meaning will be: Zakariya. after a little reflection said (in his wonder) "So!", *i.e.* "Can it really be so? Can I really have a son in my old age?" The speech following, "Thy Lord saith," etc., will then be taht of the angel-messenger.

2463 Every man was nothing just before he was created, *i.e.,* his personality was called into being by Allah. Even if there are material processes in forming the body, in accordance with the laws of nature, the real creative force is in Allah. But here there is a subtler meaning. John was the harbinger of Jesus, preparing the way for him: and this sentence also prepares us for the more wonderful birth of Jesus himself: see verse 21 below. Everything is possible with Allah.

10. (Zakariya) said: "O my Lord! give me a Sign."(2464) "Thy Sign," was the answer, "Shall be that thou shalt speak to no man for three nights,(2465) although thou art not dumb."

2464 The "Sign", I understand, was not in order to convince Zakariya that the Lord's promise was true, for he had faith; but it was a symbol by which he was to show in his conduct that he was to conform to his new destiny as the father of Yahya who was to come. Yahya was to take up the work, and Zakariya was to be silent, although the latter was sound in body and there was nothing to prevent him from speaking.

2465 Compare this verse with 3:41. The variations are interesting. Here it is "for three nights": there it is "for three days". The meaning is the same, for a day is a period of 24 hours. But the point of view is different in each case. There it was from the point of view of the Ummah or Congregation, among whom he worked by day; here the point of view is that of his individual soul, which spent the nights in prayer and praise. Notice again that at the end of the next verse, we have here, "In the morning and in the evening", and at the end of 3:41, "In the evening and in the morning"- showing again that the point of view is reversed.

11. So Zakariya came out to his people from him chamber: He told them by signs to celebrate Allah.s praises in the morning and in the evening.

12. (To his son came the command):(2466) "O Yahya! take hold of the Book with might": and We gave him Wisdom(2467) even as a youth,

2466 Time passes. The son is born. In this section of the Surah the centre of interest is Yahya, and the Instruction is now given to him. 'Keep fast hold of Allah's revelation with all your might': for an unbelieving world had either

corrupted or neglected it, and Yahya (John the Baptist) was to prepare the way for Jesus, who was coming to renew and re-interpret it.

2467 *Hukm,* translated Wisdom, implies something more than Wisdom; it is the Wisdom or Judgement that is entitled to judge and command, as in the matter of denouncing sin.

13. And piety (for all creatures) as from Us, and purity:(2468) He was devout,

2468 John the Baptist did not live long. He was imprisoned by Herod, the tetrarch (provincial ruler under the Roman Empire), whom he had reproved for his sins, and eventually beheaded at the instigation of a woman with whom Herod was infatuated. But even in his young life, he was granted (1) wisdom by Allah, for he boldly denounced sin: (2) gentle pity and love for all Allah's creatures, for he moved among the humble and lowly, and despised "soft raiment": and (3) purity of life, for he renounced the world and lived in the wilderness. All his work he did in his youth. These things showed themselves in his conduct, for he was devout, showing love to Allah and to Allah's creatures, and more particularly to his parents (for we are considering that aspect of his life): this was also shown by the fact that he never used violence, from an attitude of arrogance, nor entertained a spirit of rebellion against divine Law. (R).

14. And kind to his parents, and he was not overbearing or rebellious.

15. So Peace on him the day he was born, the day that he dies, and the day that he will be raised up to life (again)!(2469)

2469 This is spoken as in the lifetime of Yahya. Peace and Allah's Blessings were on him when he was born; they continue when he is about to die an unjust death at the hands of a tyrant; and they will be specially manifest at the Day of Judgement.

16. Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary,(2470) when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East.(2471)

2470 *Cf.* the story of Mary as related in 3:42-51. Here the whole theme is different: it is the personal side of the spiritual experiences of the worshippers of Allah in relation to their families or environment.

2471 To a private eastern chamber, perhaps in the Temple . She went into privacy, from her people and from people in general, for prayer and devotion. It was in this state of purity that the angel appeared to her in the shape of a man. She thought it *was* man. She was frightened, and adjured him not to invade her privacy.

17. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.

18. She said: "I seek refuge from thee to ((Allah)) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear Allah."

19. He said: "Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son.(2472)

2472 Allah had destined her to be the mother of the Prophet Jesus Christ, and now had come the time when this should be announced to her.

20. She said: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?"

21. He said: "So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, ´that is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us´:(2473) It is a matter (so) decreed."(2474)

2473 The mission of Jesus is announced in two ways (1) he was to be a Sign to men; his wonderful birth and wonderful life were to turn an ungodly world back to Allah: and (2) his mission was to bring solace and salvation to the repentant. This, in some way or other, is the case with all prophets of Allah, and it was pre-eminently so in the case of the Prophet Muhammad. But the point here is that the Israelites, to whom Jesus was sent, were a hardened race, for whom the message of Jesus was truly a gospel of Mercy.

2474 For anything that Allah wishes to create, He says "Be," and it is *(Cf.* 3:47). There is no interval between His decree and its accomplishment, except such as He imposes by His decree. Time may be only a projection of our own minds on this world of relativity.

22. So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place.(2475)

2475 The annunciation and the conception, we may suppose, took place in Nazareth (of Galilee), say 65 miles north of Jerusalem . The delivery took place in Bethlehem about 6 miles south of Jerusalem . It was a remote place, not only with reference to the distance of 71 miles, but because in Bethlehem itself the birth was in an obscure corner under a palm tree, from which perhaps the babe was afterwards removed to a manger in a stable.

23. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree: She cried (in her anguish): "Ah! would that I had died before this! would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!"(2476)

2476 She was but human, and suffered the pangs of an expectant mother, with no one to attend to her. The circumstances being peculiar, she had gotten far away from her people.

24. But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): "Grieve not! for thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee;

25. "And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree: It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee.(2477)

2477 Unseen Providence had seen that she should not suffer from thirst or from hunger. The rivulet provided her with water also for ablutions.

26. "So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye.(2478) And if thou dost see any man, say, ´I have vowed a fast to ((Allah)) Most Gracious, and this day will I enter into not talk with any human being´"(2479)

2478 *Cool thine eye.* An idiom for "comfort thyself and be glad". The literal meaning should not, however, be lost sight of. She was to cool her eyes (perhaps full of tears) with the fresh water of the rivulet and take comfort that a remarkable babe had been born to her. She was also to look around, and if any one came near, was to decline all conversation. It was quite true: she was under a vow, and could not talk to any one.

2479 She was to decline all conversation with man or woman, on the plea of a vow to Allah. The "fast" here does not mean abstinence from eating or drinking. It means abstinence from speaking to any human-being. (Eds.)

27. At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said: "O Mary! truly an amazing thing hast thou brought!(2480)

2480 The amazement of the people knew no bounds. In any case they were ready to think the worst of her, as she disappeared from her kin for some time. But now she comes, shamelessly parading a babe in her arms! How she had disgraced the house of Aaron, the fountain of priesthood! We may suppose that the scene took place in the Temple in J erusalem , or in Nazareth *(Cf.* 4:156).

28. "O sister of Aaron!(2481) Thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother a woman unchaste!"

2481 Aaron, the brother of Moses, was the first in the line of Israelite priesthood. Mary and her cousin Elisabeth (mother of Yahya) came of a priestly family, and were therefore "sisters of Aaron' or daughters of Imran (who was Aaron's father). See n. 375 to 3:35. Mary is reminded of her high lineage and the exceptional morals of her father and mother. How, they said, she had fallen, and disgraced the name of her progenitors!

29. But she pointed to the babe.(2482) They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?"

2482 What could Mary do! How could she explain? Would they, in their censorious mood, accept her explanation? All she could do was to point to the child, who, she knew, was no ordinary child. And the child came to her rescue. By a miracle he spoke, defended his mother, and preached-to an unbelieving audience. See 3:46, and n. 388.

30. He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah. He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet;

31. "And He hath made me blessed wheresoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live;(2483)

2483 There is a parallelism throughout the accounts of Jesus and Yahya, with some variations. Both the parallelisms and the variations are interesting. For instance Jesus declares at the very outset that he is a servant of Allah, thus negativing the false notion that he was Allah or the son of Allah, The greatness of Yahya is described in 19:12-13 in terms that are not applied to Jesus, but the verses 19:14-15 as applied to Yahya are in almost identical terms with those applied to Jesus here (19:32-33). Devotion in Prayer and Charity is a good description of the Church of Christ at its best, and pity, purity, and devotion in Yahya are a good description of the ways leading to Prayer and Charity, just as John led to Jesus.

32. "(He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable;(2484)

2484 Overbearing violence is not only unjust and harmful to those on whom it is practised; it is perhaps even more harmful to the person who practises it, for his soul becomes turbid, unsettled, and ultimately unhappy and wretched-the state of those in Hell. Here the negative qualities are "not overbearing or miserable". As applied to John they were "not overbearing or rebellious." John bore his punishment from the State without any protest or drawing back.

33. "So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)"!(2485)

2485 *Cf.* 19:15, and n 2469. Christ was not crucified (4:157). (R).

34. Such (was) Jesus the son of Mary: (it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute.(2486)

2486 The disputations about the nature of Jesus Christ were vain, but also persistent and sanguinary. The modern Christian churches have thrown them into the background, but they would do well to abandon irrational dogmas altogether.

35. It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! when He determines a matter, He only says to it, "Be", and it is.(2487)

2487 Begetting a son is a physical act depending on the needs of men's animal nature. Allah Most High is independent of all needs, and it is derogatory to Him to attribute such an act to Him. It is merely a relic of pagan and anthropomorphic materialist superstitions.

36. Verily Allah is my Lord and your Lord: Him therefore serve ye: this is a Way that is straight.(2488)

2488 As opposed to the crooked superstitions which take refuge in all sorts of metaphysical sophistries to prove three in one and one in three. In the Qur'an there is no crookedness (18:1). Christ's teaching was simple, like his life, but the Christians have made it crooked.

37. But the sects differ among themselves: and woe to the unbelievers because of the (coming) Judgment(2489) of a Momentous Day!

2489 *Judgement* the word in the original is *Mashhad ,* which implies many things: (1) the time or place where evidence is taken, as in a Court of Judgement; (2) the time or place where people are produced (to be judged); and (3) the occasion for such production for the taking of evidence. A very expressive phrase for the Day of Judgement.

38. How plainly will they see and hear, the Day that they will appear before Us! but the unjust today are in error manifest!(2490)

2490 *Cf.* 50:20-35, and that whole passage, where the Resurrection is described. (R).

39. But warn them of the Day of Distress,(2491) when the matter will be determined: for (behold,) they are negligent and they do not believe!

2491 *Hasrah:* Sighs, sighing, regrets, distress.

40. It is We Who will inherit(2492) the earth, and all beings thereon: to Us will they all be returned.

2492 *Cf.* 3:180, n. 485; 15:23 n. 1964. Material property passes from one to another: when one dies another inherits it. Allah gives life and death, and all that survives after physical death goes back to Allah, the original source of all things (see also 19:20).

41. (Also mention in the Book (the story of) Abraham: He was a man of Truth, a prophet.

42. Behold, he said to his father:(2493) "O my father! why worship that which heareth not and seeth not, and can profit thee nothing?

2493 The reference to Abraham here is in relation to his tender solicitude for his father, who had not received the light of Unity, and to whom Abraham wanted to be a guide and friend.

43. "O my father! to me hath come knowledge which hath not reached thee:(2494) so follow me: I will guide thee to a way that is even and straight.(2495)

2494 Some are more receptive to Light than others. It is their duty and privilege to guide and point to the right Way.

2495 *Sawiyan* —right, smooth, even; complete, perfect; hence the derived meanings; in 19:10, 'in full possession of all the physical senses'; in that context, 'not dumb': in 19:17, when the angel appears in the form of a man, 'completely like' a man, a man 'in all respects.'

44. "O my father! serve not Satan: for Satan is a rebel against ((Allah)) Most Gracious.(2496)

2496 The rebellion is all the more heinous and inexcusable, considering that Allah is Most Just, Most Merciful, Most Gracious.

45. "O my father! I fear lest a Penalty afflict thee(2497) from ((Allah)) Most Gracious, so that thou become to Satan a friend."

2497 To entertain a feeling of friendliness, instead of aversion, to Evil, is in itself a degradation of our nature, a Penalty which Allah imposes on our deliberate rejection of the Truth. And the friendliness to Evil also implies the sharing of the outlawry of Evil.

46. (The father) replied: "Dost thou hate my gods, O Abraham? If thou forbear not, I will indeed stone thee: Now get away from me for a good long while!"(2498)

2498 Note the gentle persuasive tone of Abraham in his speeches in 19:42-45 (for we may suppose those sentences to sum up a long course of arguments) and in 19:47-48, contrasted with the brusque and repellent tone of the father's reply in this verse. The one was the outcome of the true Light which had come to Abraham from Allah, as the other was the outcome of Pagan arrogance and the worship of brute force. The spiritual lesson from this episode of Abraham's life may be stated in four propositions: (l) the pious son is dutiful to his father and wishes him well in all things, material and spiritual; (2) if the father refuses Allah's Light, the son will do his utmost to bring such Light to the father; (3) having received the Light, the son will never renounce that Light, even if he has to forfeit his father's love and renounce his home; (4) even if the father repels him and turns him out, his answer will be a soft answer, full of love and forgiveness on the one hand, but firmness on behalf of Truth on the other.

47. Abraham said: "Peace be on thee: I will pray to my Lord for thy forgiveness:(2499) for He is to me Most Gracious.

2499 *Cf.* 9:114, where this promise of Abraham to pray for his father is referred to, and its limitations pointed out.

48. "And I will turn away from you (all) and from those whom ye invoke besides Allah. I will call on my Lord: perhaps, by my prayer to my Lord, I shall be not unblest."(2500)

2500 Abraham left his father and the home of his fathers (Ur of the Chaldees) and never returned. He left because he was turned out, and because it was not possible for him to make any compromise with what was false in religion. In return for abuse, he spoke gentle words. And he expressed his fervent hope that at least he (Abraham) would have Allah's blessing in reply to his prayers. Here was a prefigurement of another Hijrah many centuries later! In both cases the prayer was abundantly fulfilled.

49. When he had turned away from them and from those whom they worshipped besides Allah, We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob, and each one of them We made a prophet.(2501)

2501 Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob are mentioned here as carrying on one line of Abraham's traditions. The other line was carried on by Ismail, who is mentioned independently five verses lower down, as his line got special honour in the Holy Prophet of Islam. That is why his mention conies after that of Moses *Cf.* 21:72.

50. And We bestowed of Our Mercy on them, and We granted them lofty honour on the tongue(2502) of truth.

2502 Abraham and his son and grandson Isaac and Jacob, and their line, maintained the banner of Allah's spiritual truth for many generations, and they won deservedly high praise—the praise of truth—on the tongues of men. Abraham prayed that he should be praised by the tongue of truth among men to come in later ages: 26:84. Ordinary praise may mean nothing: it may be due to self-flattery on the part of others or artful management by the person praised. Praise on the tongue of sincere truth is praise indeed!

51. Also mention in the Book (the story of) Moses: for he was specially chosen, and he was a messenger (and) a prophet.(2503)

2503 Moses was (1) especially chosen, and therefore prepared and instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, in order that he might free his people from Egyptian bondage; there may also be a reference to Moses's title of *Katim Allah,* the one to whom Allah spoke without the intervention of angels: see 4:164, and n. 670); (2) he was a prophet *(nabi),* in that he received inspiration; and (3) he was a messenger *(rasul)* in that he had a Book of Revelation, and an Ummah or organised Community, for which he instituted laws. (R).

52. And we called him from the right side(2504) of Mount (Sinai), and made him draw near to Us, for mystic (converse).

2504 The incident here I think refers to the incidents described more fully in 20:9-36; a reference may also be made to Exod. 3:1-18 and 4:1-17. The time is when Moses (with his family) was travelling and grazing the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, just before he got his commission from Allah. The place is somewhere near Mount Sinai *(Jabal Musa).* Moses sees a Fire in the distance, but when he goes there, he hears a voice that tells him it is sacred ground. Allah asked him to put off his shoes and to draw near, and when he went near, great mysteries were revealed to him. He was given his commission, and his brother Aaron was given to him to go with him and aid him. It is after that that he and Aaron went and faced Pharaoh in Egypt , as narrated in 7:103-144, etc. The *right side of the* mountain may mean that Moses heard the voice from the right side of the mountain as he faced it: or it may have the figurative meaning of "right" in Arabic, *i.e.,* the side which was blessed or sacred ground (see also 20:80). (R)

53. And, out of Our Mercy,(2505) We gave him his brother Aaron, (also) a prophet.

2505 Moses was diffident, and reluctant to go to Pharaoh as he had an impediment in his tongue, and he asked that his brother Aaron should be associated with him in his mission. Allah in His Mercy granted his request: 20:25-36.

54. Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma´il: He was (strictly) true to what he promised,(2506) and he was a messenger (and) a prophet.

2506 Isma'il was *Dhadih Allah, i.e.,* the chosen sacrifice of Allah in Muslim tradition. When Abraham told him of the sacrifice, he voluntarily offered himself for it, and never flinched from his promise, until the sacrifice was redeemed by the substitution of a ram under Allah's commands. He was the fountainhead of the Arabian Ummah, and in his posterity came the Prophet of Allah. The Ummah and the Book of Islam reflect back the prophethood on Isma'il.

55. He used to enjoin on his people Prayer and Charity, and he was most acceptable in the sight of his Lord.(2507)

2507 An acceptable sacrifice: see last note.

56. Also mention in the Book the case of Idris:(2508) He was a man of truth (and sincerity), (and) a prophet:

2508 Idris is mentioned twice in the Qur'an, *viz.:* here and in 21:85, where he is mentioned among those who patiently preserved. His identification with the Biblical Enoch, who "walked with God" (Gen. 5:21-24), may or may not be correct. Nor are we justified in interpreting verse 57 here as meaning the same thing as in Gen. 5:24 ("God took him"), that he was taken up without passing through the portals of death. All we are told is that he was a man of truth and sincerity, and a prophet, and that he had a high position among his people. It is this point which brings him in the series of men just mentioned: he kept himself in touch with his people, and was honoured among them. Spiritual progress need not cut us off from our people, for we have to help and guide them. He kept to truth and piety in the highest station.

57. And We raised him to a lofty station.

58. Those were some of the prophets on whom Allah did bestow His Grace,- of the posterity of Adam, and of those who We carried (in the Ark) with Noah, and of the posterity of Abraham(2509) and Israel of those whom We guided and chose. Whenever the Signs of ((Allah)) Most Gracious were rehearsed to them,(2510) they would fall down in prostrate adoration and in tears.

2509 The earlier generations are grouped into three epochs from a spiritual point of view: (1) from Adam to Noah, (2) from Noah to Abraham, and (3) from Abraham to an indefinite time, say to the time when the Message of Allah was corrupted and the need arose for the final Messenger of Unity and Truth. Israel is another name for Jacob.

2510 The original is in the Aorist tense, implying that the "Posterity" alluded to includes not only the messengers but their worthy followers who are true to Allah and uphold His standard.

59. But after them there followed a posterity who missed prayers and followed after lusts soon, then, will they face Destruction,-(2511)

2511 This selfish godless posterity gains the upper hand at certain times but, even then there is always a minority who see the error of their ways, repent and believe, and live righteous lives. They are not penalised in the Hereafter because they were associated with the ungodly in time. They reap the full reward of their faith and righteousness.

60. Except those who repent and believe, and work righteousness: for these will enter the Garden and will not be wronged in the least,-

61. Gardens of Eternity, those which ((Allah)) Most Gracious has promised to His servants in the Unseen: for His promise must (necessarily) come to pass.

62. They will not there hear any vain discourse, but only salutations of Peace:(2512) And they will have therein their sustenance,(2513) morning and evening.

2512 *Salam,* translated "Peace", has a much wider signification. It includes (1) a sense of security and permanence, which is unknown in this life; (2) soundness, freedom from defects, perfection, as in the word *salim:* (3) preservation, salvation, deliverance, as in the word *sallama;* (4) salutation, accord with those around us; (5) resignation, in the sense that we are satisfied and not discontented; besides (6) the ordinary meaning of Peace, *i.e.,* freedom from any jarring element. All these shades of meaning are implied in the word *Islam,* (R).

2513 *Rizq:* literally sustenance or means of subsistence, the term covers all the means of perfect satisfaction of the body and soul. Morning and evening *i.e.,* early and late, all the time, always. (R).

63. Such is the Garden which We give as an inheritance to those of Our servants who guard against Evil.

64. (The angels say:)(2514) "We descend not but by command of thy Lord: to Him belongeth what is before us and what is behind us, and what is between: and thy Lord never doth forget,-

2514 We are apt to be impatient of the evils we see around us. We may give of our best service to Allah, and yet see no results. In our human short-sightedness we may complain within ourselves. But we must not be impatient. The angels of Grace come not haphazardly, but by command of Allah according to His Universal Will and Purpose. Allah does not forget. If things are delayed, it is in accordance with a wise providence, which cares for all. Our plain duty is to be patient and constant in His service. (R).

65. "Lord of the heavens and of the earth, and of all that is between them; so worship Him, and be constant and patient in His worship: knowest thou of any who is worthy of the same Name as He?"(2515)

2515 The more we taste of the truth and mystery of life, the more do we realise that there is no one to be mentioned in the same breath as Allah. He is above all names. But when we think of His beautiful qualities, and picture them to ourselves by names which give us some ideas of Him, we can search the whole wide world of our imagination, and we shall not find another to be compared with Him in name or quality. He is the One: praise be to Him!

66. Man says: "What! When I am dead, shall I then be raised up alive?"

67. But does not man call to mind that We created him before out of nothing?

68. So, by thy Lord, without doubt, We shall gather them together, and (also) the Evil Ones (with them);(2516) then shall We bring them forth on their knees round about Hell;(2517)

2516 The disbelief in a future state is not merely a philosophic doubt, but a warped will, a disingenuous obstinacy in face of our inner spiritual instincts and experiences. We were nothing before. Cannot the same Allah who created us out of nothing also continue our personality? But if we refuse to accept His light and guidance, our state will grow worse and worse. We shall be deprived of His grace. We shall be herded with the Evil Ones. In utter humiliation we shall be faced with all the consequences of our refusal of Truth.

2517 *Round about Hell:* There are many ways leading to evil, and people get to it from all round. Hence the mention of the seven Gates of Hell: see 15:44, and n. 1977. (R).

69. Then shall We certainly drag out from every sect all those who were worst in obstinate rebellion against ((Allah)) Most Gracious.

70. And certainly We know best those who are most worthy of being burned therein.

71. Not one of you but will(2518) pass over it: this is, with thy Lord, a Decree which must be accomplished.

2518 Three interpretations are possible: (1) The general interpretation is that every soul must pass through or by or over the Fire. Those who have had *Taqwa* (see n. 26 to 2:2) will be saved by Allah's Mercy, while unrepentant sinners will suffer the torments in ignominy. (2) If we refer (he pronoun "you" to those "in obstinate rebellion" in verse 69 above, both leaders and followers in sin, this verse only applies to the wicked. (3) Some refer this verse to the Bridge over Hell, the Bridge *Sirat,* over which all must pass to their final Destiny. This Bridge is not mentioned in the Qur'an. (R).

72. But We shall save those who guarded against evil, and We shall leave the wrong-doers therein, (humbled) to their knees.

73. When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them, the Unbelievers say to those who believe, "Which of the two sides is best in point of position? Which makes the best show in council?"(2519)

2519 The Unbelievers may, for a time, make a better show in worldly position, or in people's assemblages where things are judged by the counting of heads. But Truth must prevail even in this world, and ultimately the positions must be reversed.

74. But how many (countless) generations before them have we destroyed, who were even better in equipment and in glitter to the eye?

75. Say: "If any men go astray, ((Allah)) Most Gracious extends (the rope) to them, until, when they see the warning of Allah (being fulfilled) - either in punishment(2520) or in (the approach of) the Hour,- they will at length realise who is worst in position, and (who) weakest in forces!

2520 Allah's wanting is that every evil deed must have its punishment, and that there will be a Hereafter, the day of Judgement, or the Hour, as it is frequently called. The punishment of evil often begins in this very life. For instance, over-indulgence and excesses of all kinds bring on their Nemesis quite soon in this very life. But some subtler forms of selfishness and sin will be punished—as every evil will be punished—in its own good time, as the Hour approaches. In either case, the arrogant boasting sinners will realise that their taunt— who is best in position and in forces? (19:73)—is turned against themselves.

76. "And Allah doth advance in guidance those who seek guidance: and the things that endure, Good Deeds, are best in the sight of thy Lord, as rewards, and best in respect of (their) eventual returns."(2521)

2521 These lines are the same as in 18:46 (second clause), (where see n. 2387), except that the word *maradda* (eventual returns) is here subsituted for *amal* (hope). The meaning is practically the same: but "hope" is more appropriate in the passage dealing with this world's goods, and "eventual returns" in the passage dealing with sinner's specific investments and commitments in worldly position and organised cliques.

77. Hast thou then seen the (sort of) man who rejects Our Signs, yet says: "I shall certainly be given wealth and children?"(2522)

2522 Besides the man who boasts of wealth and power in actual possession, there is a type of man who boasts of getting them in the future and builds his worldly hopes thereon. Is he sure? He denies Allah, and His goodness and Mercy. But all good is in the hands of Allah. Can such a man then bind Allah to bless him when he rejects faith in Allah? Or does he pretend that he has penetrated the mysteries of the future? For no man can tell what the future holds for him.

78. Has he penetrated to the Unseen, or has he taken a contract with ((Allah)) Most Gracious?

79. Nay! We shall record what he says, and We shall add and add to his punishment.(2523)

2523 Such a man deserves double punishment-for rejecting Allah, and for his blasphemies with His Holy Name.

80. To Us shall return(2524) all that he talks of and he shall appear before Us bare and alone.

2524 Literally, "We shall inherit", *Cf.* 19:40 and n. 2492. Even if the man had property and power, it must go back to the source of all things, and the man must appear before the Judgement Seat, alone and unaccompanied, stripped of all the things from which he expected so much!

81. And they have taken (for worship) gods other than Allah, to give them power and glory!(2525)

2525 *'Izza* = exalted rank, power, might, the ability to impose one's will or to carry out one's will.

82. Instead, they shall reject their worship, and become adversaries against them.(2526)

2526 *Cf* 10:28-30, where the idols deny that they knew anything of their worship, and leave their worshippers in the lurch; and 5:116, where Jesus denies that he asked for worship, and leaves his false worshippers to the punishment or the mercy of Allah.

83. Seest thou not that We have set the Evil Ones on against the unbelievers, to incite them with fury?(2527)

2527 Under the laws instituted by Allah, when evil reaches a certain stage of rebellion and defiance, it is left to gather momentum and to rush with fury to its own destruction. It is given a certain amount of respite, as a last chance: but failing repentance, its days are numbered. The godly therefore should not worry themselves over the apparent worldly success of evil, but should get on with their own duties in a spirit of trust in Allah.

84. So make no haste against them, for We but count out to them a (limited) number (of days).

85. The day We shall gather the righteous to ((Allah)) Most Gracious, like a band presented before a king for honours,

86. And We shall drive the sinners to Hell, like thirsty cattle driven down to water,-(2528)

2528 Note the contrast between the saved and the doomed. The one march with dignity like honoured ones before a king, and the other rush in anguish to their punishment like a herd of cattle driven down by thirst to their watering place. Note the metaphor of the water. They rush madly for water but are plunged into the Fire!

87. None shall have the power of intercession, but such a one as has received permission (or promise) from ((Allah)) Most Gracious.

88. They say: "((Allah)) Most Gracious has begotten a son!"

89. Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous!(2529)

2529 The belief in Allah begetting a son is not a question of words or of speculative thought. It is a stupendous blasphemy against Allah. It lowers Allah to the level of an animal. If combined with the doctrine of vicarious atonement, it amounts to a negation of Allah's justice and man's personal responsibility. It is destructive of all moral and spiritual order, and is condemned in the strongest possible terms.

90. At it the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin,

91. That they should invoke a son for ((Allah)) Most Gracious.

92. For it is not consonant with the majesty of ((Allah)) Most Gracious that He should beget a son.(2530)

2530 This basic principle was laid down early in the argument (19:35). It was illustrated by a reference to the personal history of many messengers, including Jesus himself, who behaved justly as men to their kith and kin and humbly served Allah. The evil results of such superstitions were pointed out in the case of many previous generations which went to their ruin by dishonouring Allah. And the argument is now rounded off towards the close of the Surah.

93. Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to ((Allah)) Most Gracious as a servant.

94. He does take an account of them (all), and hath numbered them (all) exactly.(2531)

2531 Allah has no sons or favourites or parasites, such as we associate with human beings. On the other hand every creature of His gets His love, and His cherishing care. Every one of them, however humble, is individually marked before His Throne of Justice and Mercy, and will stand before Him on his own deserts.

95. And everyone of them will come to Him singly on the Day of Judgment.

96. On those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, will (Allah) Most Gracious bestow love.(2532)

2532 His own love, and the love for man's fellow creatures, in the world and in the Hereafter. Goodness breeds love and peace, and sin breeds hatred and contention.

97. So have We made the (Qur´an) easy in thine own tongue, that with it thou mayest give Glad Tidings to the righteous, and warnings to people given to contention.

98. But how many (countless) generations before them(2533) have We destroyed? Canst thou find a single one of them (now) or hear (so much as) a whisper of them?

2533 *Cf.* 19:74, from which this sentence is brought up as a reminiscence, showing the progress of sin, the Guidance which Allah gives to the good, the degradation of blasphemy, the respite granted, and the final End, when personal responsibility will be enforced.



20. Ta Ha

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Ta-Ha.(2534)

2534 For an explanation see the Introduction to this Surah. If the meaning is "O man!", that is itself a mystic meaning, as explained, but the letters form a word and would not be classified strictly as Abbreviated Letters: see n. 25 to 2:1. This, however, is a question of classification and does not affect the meaning. This is conjectural, and no one can be dogmatic about it.

2. We have not sent down the Qur´an to thee to be (an occasion) for thy distress,(2535)

2535 Allah's revelation may cause some human trouble for two reasons: (1) it checks man's selfishness and narrowness of view, and (2) it annoys the wicked and causes them to jeer and persecute. These are mere incidental things, due to man's own shortcomings. As far as the trouble is concerned, the revelation is meant to give a warning, so that persecutors may be reclaimed, (and of course for men of faith it is comfort and consolation, though that point does not arise in this context).

3. But only as an admonition to those who fear ((Allah)),-

4. A revelation from Him Who created the earth and the heavens on high.

5. ((Allah)) Most Gracious(2536) is firmly established on the throne (of authority).

2536 *Cf.* 10:3, n. 1386. If things seem to be wrong in our imperfect vision on this earth, we must remember that Allah, Who encompasses all Creation and sits on the throne of Grace and Mercy, is in command, and our Faith tells us that all must be right. Allah's authority is not like an authority on earth, which may be questioned, or which may not last. His authority is "firmly established".

6. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth, and all between them, and all beneath the soil.(2537)

2537 An exhaustive definition of everything we can conceive of—what is in the heavens, on the earth. or between, or within the bowls of the earth.

7. If thou pronounce the word aloud, (it is no matter): for verily He knoweth what is secret and what is yet more hidden.(2538)

2538 There are two implications. (1) Whatever you profess, or say aloud, gives no information to Allah: He knows not only what is secret and perhaps unknown to others, but what people take special care to conceal. (2) It docs you no good to make insincere professions: your hidden motives are known to Him, Who alone matters. (3) If you read the Word of Allah, or if you pray to Allah, it is not necessary to raise your voice: in either case, Allah will judge you by your inner thoughts which are like an open book to Him.

8. Allah. there is no god but He! To Him belong the most Beautiful Names.(2539)

2539 *Cf.* 17:110 and n. 2322. Allah is all-in-all, and the most beautiful things we can think of arc referable to Him. His names refer to His attributes which arc like titles of Honour and Glory. (R).

9. Has the story of Moses(2540) reached thee?

2540 The story of Moses in its different incidents is told in many places in the Qur'an, and in each case the phase most appropriate in the context is referred to or emphasised. In 2:49-61, it was a phase from the religious history of mankind; in 7:103-162, it was a phase from the story of the 'Ummah (or nation) of Israel, and the story was continued to the times after Moses; in 17:101-103, we have a picture of the decline of a soul in the arrogance of Pharaoh; here, in 20:9-24, we have a picture of the rise of a soul in the commission given to Moses from Allah; in 20:25-36, we have his spiritual relationship with his brother Aaron; in 20:37-40, we have his spiritual relation with his mother and sister, and his upbringing; in 20:41-76, we have his spiritual combat with Pharaoh; and in 20:77-98, we have his spiritual combat with his own people, the Israelites. For other incidents, consult the Index.

10. Behold, he saw a fire:(2541) So he said to his family, "Tarry ye; I perceive a fire; perhaps I can bring you some burning brand therefrom, or find some guidance at the fire."(2542)

2541 *A fire.* It appeared like an ordinary fire, which always betokens the presence of men in a desert or a lonely place. Moses made for it alone, to fetch the wherewithal for making a fire for his family, and perhaps to find some direction as to the way, from the people he should meet there. But it was not an ordinary fire. It was a Burning Bush; a Sign of the Glory of Allah.

2542 The spiritual history of Moses begins here. It was his spiritual birth. His physical life, infancy, and upbringing are referred to later on, to illustrate another point. Moses, when he grew up, left the palace of Pharaoh and went to the Midianite people, in the Sinai peninsula . He married among them, and was now travelling with his family and his flocks, when he was called to his mission by Allah. He went to look for a fire for comfort and guidance. He found a higher and holier comfort and guidance. The whole passage is full of portent meaning, which is reflected in the short rhymed verses in the original. (R).

11. But when he came to the fire, a voice was heard: "O Moses!

12. "Verily I am thy Lord! therefore (in My presence)(2543) put off thy shoes: thou art in the sacred valley Tuwa.(2544)

2543 The shoes are to be put off as a mark of respect. Moses was now to put away his mere worldly interests, and anything of mere worldly utility, he having been chosen by Allah, the Most High. (R).

2544 This was the valley just below Mount Sinai , where subsequently he was to receive the Law. In the parallel mystic meaning, we are selected by trials in this humble life, whose valley is just as sacred and receives Allah's glory just as much as the heights of the Mount *Turif* we but have the insights to perceive it.

13. "I have chosen thee: listen, then, to the inspiration (sent to thee).

14. "Verily, I am Allah. There is no god but I: So serve thou Me (only), and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise.

15. "Verily the Hour is coming -(2545) My design is to keep it hidden -(2546) for every soul to receive its reward by the measure of its Endeavour.

2545 The first need is to mend our lives and worship and serve Allah, as in the last verse. The next is to realise the meaning of the Hereafter, when every soul will get the meed of its conduct in this life.

2546 *Ukhfi* may mean either "keep it hidden", or "make it manifest", and the Commentators have taken, some one meaning and some the other. If the first is taken, it means that the exact hour or day when the Judgement comes is hidden from man; if the second, it means that the fact of the Judgement to come is made known, that man may remember and take warning. I think that both meanings are implied. (R).

16. "Therefore let not such as believe not therein but follow their own lusts, divert thee therefrom,(2547) lest thou perish!"..

2547 Moses had yet to meet the formidable opposition of the arrogant Pharaoh and his proud Egyptians, and later, the rebellion of his own people. In receiving his commission, he is warned of both dangers. This relates to man's own soul: when once the light reaches him let him hold fast to it, lest he perish. He will be beset with dangers of all kinds around him: the worst will be the danger of unbelieving people who seem to thrive on their selfishness and in following their own vain desires! (R).

17. "And what is that in the right hand, O Moses?"

18. He said, "It is(2548) my rod: on it I lean; with it I beat down fodder for my flocks; and in it I find other uses."

2548 Now comes the miracle of the rod. First of all, the attention of Moses himself is drawn to it, and he thinks of the ordinary uses to which he puts it in his daily life. (R).

19. ((Allah)) said, "Throw it, O Moses!"

20. He threw it, and behold! It was a snake, active in motion.(2549)

2549 *Cf.* 7:107, where a different word *(thu'ban* is used for *"snake",* and the qualifying adjective is "plain (for all to *see)".* The scene there is before Pharaoh and his magicians and people: the object is to show the hollowness of their magic by a miracle: the rod appears before them as a long and creeping, writhing serpent. Here there is a symbol to present Allah's Mystery to Moses's mind and understanding: the rod becomes a *Hayy* (a *live* snake), and its *active* motion is

what is most to be impressed on the mind of Moses, for there were no other spectators. So the highest spiritual mysteries can be grasped, with Allah's gift of insight, from the most ordinary things of daily use. Once they are grasped, there is no question of fear. They really are the virtues of this life lifted up to the glorious spiritual plane.

21. ((Allah)) said, "Seize it, and fear not: We shall return it at once to its former condition"..

22. "Now draw thy hand(2550) close to thy side: It shall come forth white (and shining), without harm (or stain),- as another Sign,-

2550 The second of the greater Miracles shown to Moses was the "White (shining) Hand". Ordinarily, when the skin becomes white, it is a sign of disease, leprosy or something loathsome. Here there was no question of disease: on the contrary, the hand was glorified, and it shone as with a divine light. Such a miracle was beyond Egyptian or human magic *(Cf.* 27:12 and 28:32). (R).

23. "In order that We may show thee (two) of our Greater Signs.

24. "Go thou to Pharaoh,(2551) for he has indeed transgressed all bounds."

2551 Moses, having been spiritually prepared now gets his definite commission to go to Pharaoh and point out the error of his ways. So inordinate was Pharaoh's vanity that he had it in his mind to say: "I am your Lord Most High!" (79:24).

25. (Moses) said: "O my Lord! expand me my breast;(2552)

2552 The breast is reputed to be the seat of knowledge and affections. The gift of the highest spiritual insight is what he prays for first. *Cf.* 94:1. This was the most urgent in point of time. There are three other things he also asks for: *viz.,* (1) Allah's help in his task, which at first appears difficult to him; (2) the gift of eloquence, and the removal of the impediment from his speech; and (3) the counsel and constant attendance with him of his brother Aaron, whom he loved and trusted, for he would otherwise be alone among the Egyptians.

26. "Ease my task for me;

27. "And remove the impediment(2553) from my speech,

2553 Literally, "Loosen a knot from my tongue".

28. "So they may understand what I say:

29. "And give me a Minister from my family,

30. "Aaron, my brother;

31. "Add to my strength(2554) through him,

2554 Literally, "Strengthen my back with him". A man's strength lies in his back and backbone so that he can stand erect and boldly face his tasks.

32. "And make him share my task:

33. "That we may celebrate(2555) Thy praise without stint,

2555 The requests that Moses makes are inspired, not by earthly but by spiritual motives. The motive, expressed in the most general terms, is to glorify Allah, not in an occasional way, but systematically and continuously, "without stint." The clauses in this verse and the next, taken together, govern all the requests he makes, from verse 25 to verse 32.

34. "And remember Thee without stint:

35. "For Thou art He that (ever) regardeth us."(2556)

2556 The celebration of Allah's praise and remembrance is one form of showing gratitude on the part of Moses for the Grace which Allah had bestowed upon him.

36. ((Allah)) said: "Granted is thy prayer, O Moses!"

37. "And indeed We conferred a favour on thee another time (before).

38. "Behold! We sent(2557) to thy mother, by inspiration, the message:

2557 The story is not told, but only those salient points recapitulated which bear on the spiritual upbringing" and work of Moses. Long after the age of Joseph, who had been a Wazir to one of the kings, there came on the throne of Egypt a Pharaoh who hated the Israelites and wanted them annihilated. He ordered Israelite male children to be killed when they were born. Moses's mother hid him for a time, but when further concealment was impossible, a thought crossed her mind that she should put her child into a chest and send the chest floating down the Nile . This was not merely a foolish fancy of hers. It was Allah's Plan to bring up Moses in all the learning of the Egyptians, in order that that learning itself should be used to expose what was wrong in it and to advance the glory of Allah. The chest was floated into the river Nile . It flowed on into a stream that passed through Pharaoh's Garden, It was picked up by Pharaoh's people and the child was adopted by Pharaoh's wife. See 28:4-13.

39. "´Throw (the child) into the chest, and throw (the chest) into the river: the river will cast him up on the bank, and he will be taken up by one who is an enemy to Me and an enemy to him´:(2558) But I cast (the garment of) love over thee from Me:(2559) and (this) in order that thou mayest be reared under Mine eye.(2560)

2558 Pharaoh was an enemy to Allah, because he was puffed up and he blasphemed, claiming to be God himself. He was an enemy to the child Moses, because he hated the Israelites and wanted to have their male children killed; also because Moses stood for Allah's revelation to come.

2559 Allah made the child comely and lovable, and he attracted the love of the people who, on general grounds, would have killed him.

2560 See n. 2558 above. By making the child Moses so attractive as to be adopted into Pharaoh's household, not only was Moses brought up in the best way possible from an earthly point of view, but Allah's special Providence looked after him in bringing his mother to him, as stated in the next verse, and thus nourishing him on his mother's milk and keeping in touch, in his inner growth, with the feelings and sentiments of his people, the Israelites.

40. "Behold! thy sister goeth forth and saith, ´shall I show you one who will nurse and rear the (child)?´(2561) So We brought thee back to thy mother, that her eye(2562) might be cooled and she should not grieve. Then thou didst slay(2563) a man, but We saved thee from trouble, and We tried thee in various ways. Then didst thou tarry a number of years with the people of Midian.(2564) Then didst thou come hither as ordained, O Moses!

2561 We may suppose that the anxious mother, after the child was floated on the water, sent the child's sister to follow the chest from the bank and see where and by whom it was picked up. When it was picked up by Pharaoh's own family and they seemed to love the child, she appeared like a stranger before them, and said, "Shall I search out a good wet nurse for the child, that she may rear the child you are going to adopt?" That was exactly what they wanted. She ran home and told her mother. The mother was delighted to come and fold the infant in her arms again and feed it at her own breast, and all openly and without any concealment.

2562 The mother's eyes had, we may imagine, been sore with scalding tears at the separation from her baby. Now they were cooled: a phrase meaning that her heart was comforted.

2563 Years passed. The child grew up. In outward learning he was of the house of Pharaoh. In his inner soul and sympathy he was of Israel . One day, he went to the Israelite colony and saw all the Egyptian oppression Under which Israel laboured. He saw an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, apparently with impunity. Moses felt brotherly sympathy ard smote the Egyptian. He did not intend to kill him, but in fact the Egyptian died of the blow. When this became known, his position in Pharaoh's household became impossible. So he fled out of Egypt , and was only saved by Allah's grace. He fled to the Sinai Peninsula , to the land of the Midianites, and had various adventures. He marries one of the daughters of the Midianite chief, and lived with the Midianites for many years, as an Egyptian stranger. He had many trials and temptations, but he retained his integrity of character.

2564 See last note. After many years spent in a quiet life, grazing his father-in-law's flocks, he came one day to the valley of Tuwa underneath the great mountain mass of Sinai, called Tur (in Arabic). The peak on the Arabian side (where Moses was) was called Horeb by the Hebrews. Then was fulfilled Allah's Plan: he saw the fire in the distance, and when he went up, he was addressed by Allah and chosen to be Allah's Messenger for that age.

41. "And I have prepared thee for Myself (for service)"..

42. "Go, thou and thy brother.(2565) With My Signs, and slacken not, either of you, in keeping Me in remembrance.

2565 We may suppose that Moses had fled alone to the land of Midian , and that he had now come alone (with his family but not with his brother) to Tuwa, as described in n. 2542 above. When he was honoured with his mission, and was granted his request that his brother Aaron should accompany him, we may suppose that he took steps to get Aaron to come to him, and their meeting was in Tuwa. Some time may be supposed to have elapsed before they were in Egypt , and then they prayed, and received these directions in their Egyptian home. Aaron was either an elder or a younger brother--we are not told which. In either case he was born when the ban on Israelite new-born babes was not in operation. Moses had been out of touch with him, and it speaks greatly for his family affection that he remembered him and prayed for his comradeship in the most serious spiritual work of his life.

43. "Go, both of you, to Pharaoh,(2566) for he has indeed transgressed all bounds;(2567)

2566 Their mission was in the first instance to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians, and then to lead Israel out of Egypt .

2567 Compare the same phrase in 20:24. Having glanced at the early life of Moses we come back now to the time when Moses's actual ministry begins. The earlier personal story of Moses is rounded off.

44. "But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (Allah)."(2568)

2568 So far Pharaoh, in his inordinate vanity, had forgotten himself and forgotten how small a creature he was before Allah. This was to be brought to his recollection, so that he might perhaps repent and believe, or at least be deterred by fear from "transgressing all bounds". Some men eschew wrong from sincere love of Allah and understanding of their fellow-men, and some (of coarser minds) from the fear of consequences. Even the latter conduct may be a step to the former.

45. They (Moses and Aaron) said: "Our Lord! We fear lest he hasten with insolence(2569) against us, or lest he transgress all bounds."

2569 They were now in Egypt (see n. 2565 above) and therefore in the power of the Pharaoh. The local atmosphere called for the greatest courage and firmness on their part to carry out the dangerous mission which had been entrusted to them.

46. He said: "Fear not: for I am with you: I hear and see (everything).

47. "So go ye both to him, and say, ´Verily we are messengers sent by thy Lord: Send forth, therefore, the Children of Israel with us, and afflict them not:(2570) with a Sign, indeed, have we come from thy Lord! and peace to all who follow guidance!(2571)

2570 The Children of Israel were subjected to all sorts of oppression and indignities. They were given hard tasks; their leaders were unjustly beaten; they were forced to make bricks without straw; and they "groaned in bondage" (Exod. 5:6-19, 6:5).

2571 Allah, in His infinite Mercy, always offers Peace to the most hardened sinners, even those who are warring against Him. But, as stated in the next verse, their defiance cannot go on with impunity indefinitely. The punishment must inevitably come for sin, whether the sinner is great or small.

48. "´Verily it has been revealed to us that the Penalty (awaits) those who reject and turn away.´"

49. (When this message was delivered), (Pharaoh) said: "Who, then, O Moses, is the Lord(2572) of you two?"

2572 Notice how subtly Pharaoh rejects the implication in Moses's speech, in which Moses had referred to "thy Lord" (verse 47). Pharaoh implicitly repudiates the suggestion that the Allah who had sent Moses and Aaron could possibly be Pharaoh's Lord. He asks insolently, "Who is this Lord of yours, of Whom ye speak as having sent you?"

50. He said: "Our Lord is He Who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further, gave (it) guidance."(2573)

2573 The answer of Moses is straightforward, dignified, and illuminating. He will not dispute about "my Lord" or "your Lord", the God of Israel, or the God of Egypt. He and his brother were proud to serve "our Lord," but He was the universal Lord and Cherisher, the One and Only God, Who had created all beings and all things. It was from Him that each created thing derived its form and nature, including such free will and power as man had got. He, Pharaoh, was subject to the same condition. In order that the free will should be rightly exercised, Allah had given guidance through His Messengers, and His Signs. Moses and Aaron stood as such Messengers, with such Signs. Will Pharaoh now understand and do right?

51. (Pharaoh) said: "What then is the condition of previous generations?"(2574)

2574 But Pharaoh was not the man to accept teaching from the despised Israelite-one; two, who in his eyes was a renegade from the higher Egyptian civilisation. "If, he says in effect, "there is only one God, to Whom all things are referred, this is a new religion. What of the religion of our ancestors? Were they wrong in worshipping the Egyptian gods? And if they were wrong, are they in misery now? He wanted to trap Moses into scathing denunciations of his ancestors, which would at once have deprived him of the sympathy or the hearing of the Egyptian crowd.

52. He replied: "The knowledge of that is with my Lord,(2575) duly recorded: my Lord never errs, nor forgets,-

2575 Moses did not fall into the trap. He remembered the injunction given to him to speak mildly (20:44). He speaks mildly, but does not in any way whittle down the truth. He said in effect: 'Allah's knowledge is perfect, as if, with men, it were a record. For men may make mistakes or may not remember, but Allah never makes mistakes and never forgets. But Allah is not only All-Knowing: He is also All-Good. Look around you: the whole earth is spread out like a carpet. Men go to and fro in it freely. He sends abundance of water from the skies, which comes down in Nile floods and fertilises the whole soil of Egypt , and feeds men and animals *(Cf. n.* 1029 and n. 3646).

53. "He Who has, made for you the earth like a carpet spread out; has enabled you to go about therein by roads(2576) (and channels); and has sent down water from the sky." With it have We produced(2577) diverse pairs of plants(2578) each separate from the others.

2576 *Sabil* means not only a road, but would include water-roads or channels, and in modern conditions airways-in fact all means of communication *(Cf.* 43:10).

2577 This seems to be outside the speech of Moses, and connects itself with the following verses 54-56, as part of the Word of Allah, expanding the speech of Moses and explaining the working of Allah's Providence in nature.

2578 *Azwaj:* we might translate here (as in 15:88) by "classes" instead of "pairs"; but as sex in plants seems to be referred to elsewhere

54. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle: verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding.

55. From the (earth) did We create you, and into it shall We return you, and from it shall We bring you out once again.(2579)

2579 This verse ought really to go into the last Section.

56. And We showed Pharaoh all Our Signs, but he did reject and refuse.(2580)

2580 This is a sort of general introduction to the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh. The Signs are not only the countering of the fraudulent magic of Egypt with real miracles, but the subsequent Plagues (not mentioned here) and the Crossing of the Red Sea by Israel . (R).

57. He said: "Hast thou come to drive us out of our land with thy magic(2581) O Moses?

2581 The Egyptians accused Moses of a design to deprive them of their land, and of exercising black magic. Both charges were palpably false. What Moses wanted to do was to free his people from bondage. The Egyptians had all the power in their possession; they wished to use the Israelites as untouchable helots: and anyone who wanted to mitigate this injustice was branded as a dreadful person who wished to deprive em of their lawful rights. As to magic, the Egyptians judged Moses by themselves. They practised sorcery to deceive the people. They accused the Prophet of Allah of doing the same, though both his outlook and source of his strength were altogether different.

58. "But we can surely produce magic to match thine! So make a tryst between us and thee, which we shall not fail to keep - neither we nor thou - in a place where both shall have even chances."(2582)

2582 *Suwan:* literally, 'equal, even.' It has been construed to mean: (1) a place equally distant for both sides, a central place, or (2) equally convenient to both sides, or (3) an open level plain, where the people can collect with ease. All these are possible meanings, but the one I have adopted is more comprehensive, and includes the others, *viz.:* (4) a place where both sides shall have even chances, "a fair place", as Palmer laconically translates it.

59. Moses said: "Your tryst is the Day of the Festival,(2583) and let the people be assembled when the sun is well up."

2583 A great day of a Temple Festival , when the temples and streets were decorated, and people were on holiday, free from work *(Cf.* 26:38). Moses makes this appointment in order to collect as large a number Possible, for his first duty is to preach the Truth. And he apparently did it with some effect with some Egyptians (20:70, 72-76), though the Pharaoh and his high and mighty officers rejected the Truth and afterwards Paid the Penalty.

60. So Pharaoh withdrew: He concerted his plan,(2584) and then came (back).

2584 Pharaoh was apparently taken aback at Moses appointing a solemn day of public Festival, when there would be a large concourse and there would sure to be some people not in the Court clique, who might be critical of Pharaoh's own sorcerers. But probably there was something more in their dark counsels, something unfair and wicked, to which Moses refers in his speech in the next verse.

61. Moses said to him: Woe to you! Forge not ye a lie against Allah, lest He destroy you (at once) utterly by chastisement: the forger must suffer(2585) frustration!"

2585 Moses had some idea of their trickery and deceit. They would palm off their fraudulent magic as coming from Allah or from their gods! He warns them that their tricks will stand exposed, and their hopes will be defeated.

62. So they disputed, one with another, over their affair, but they kept their talk secret.(2586)

2586 They knew that they had here to deal with no ordinary man, but a man with powers above what they could conceive of. But evil always thinks evil. Judging Moses and Aaron by their own standards, they thought that these two were also tricksters, with some tricks superior to their own. All they had to do was to stand together, and they must win. I construe 20: 63-64 to be their private talk among themselves, followed by their open challenge to Moses in 20:65.

63. They said: "These two are certainly (expert) magicians: their object is to drive you out from your land with their magic, and to do away with your most cherished institutions.(2587)

2587 *Cf.* 20:104. 'Your most cherished institutions,' *i.e.,* 'your ancestral and time-honoured religion and magic'. *Muthla,* feminine of *Amthal,* most distinguished, honoured, cherished. *Tariqah* = way of life, institutions, conduct.

64. "Therefore concert your plan, and then assemble in (serried) ranks: He wins (all along) today who gains the upper hand."(2588)

2588 Presumably Pharaoh was in this secret conference, and he promises the most lavish rewards to the magicians if they overcome Moses. See 7:114. That-but I think more than that-is implied. That day was to be the crisis: if they won then, they would win all along, and Moses and his people would be crushed

65. They said: "O Moses! whether wilt thou that thou throw (first) or that we be the first to throw?"

66. He said, "Nay, throw ye first!" Then behold their ropes and their rods-(2589)so it seemed to him on account of their magic - began to be in lively motion!

2589 Their bag of tricks was so clever that it imposed upon all beholders. Their ropes and their rods were thrown, and seemed to move about like snakes. So realistic was the effect that even Moses felt the least bit of doubt in his own mind. He of course had no tricks, and he relied entirely on Allah.

67. So Moses conceived in his mind a (sort of) fear.(2590)

2590 The concerted attack of evil is sometimes so well-contrived from all points that falsehood appears and is acclaimed as the truth. The believer of truth is isolated, and a sort of moral dizziness creeps over his mind. But by Allah's grace Faith asserts itself, gives him confidence, and points out the specific truths which will dissipate and destroy the teeming brood of falsehood.

68. We said: "Fear not! for thou hast indeed the upper hand:

69. "Throw that which is in thy right hand: Quickly will it swallow up that which they have faked what they have faked is but a magician´s trick: and the magician thrives not, (no matter) where he goes."(2591)

2591 The meaning may be either (1) that falsehood and trickery may have their day, but they cannot win everywhere , especially in the presence of Truth, or (2) that trickery and magic must come to an evil end. 2592. *Cf.* this passage with 7:120-126 and 20:65-70 and the notes thereon.

70. So the magicians were thrown down to prostration: they said, "We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses".(2592)

2592 *Cf.* this passage with 7:120-126 and 20:65-70 and the notes thereon.

71. (Pharaoh) said: "Believe ye in Him before I give you permission? Surely this must be your leader, who has taught you magic!(2593) be sure I will cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will have you crucified on trunks of palm-trees: so shall ye know for certain, which of us can give the more severe and the more lasting punishment!"

2593 Pharaoh accuses his sorcerers who have been converted, of having been in league with Moses all the time, and in fact of having been led and taught by him! So arrogance and evil cannot conceive of Allah s worlds and worlds of beauty and truth beyond its own narrow vision! It is truly blind, and its very cleverness deludes is to wander far from the truth.

72. They said: "Never shall we regard thee as more than the Clear Sings(2594) that have come to us, or than Him Who created us! so decree whatever thou desirest to decree: for thou canst only decree (touching) the life of this world.(2595)

2594 *Clear Signs:* the miracles, the personality of the Messengers of Allah, the logic of events as they unfolded themselves, and the light of inner conviction in their own conscience. There are, in addition, the Signs and Proofs of Allah in nature, which are referred to in many places, *e.g.,* 20:53-54.

2595 Thus was the first part of the mission of Moses—that to the Egyptians—fulfilled. See n. 1083 to 7:126; also Appendix V.

73. "For us, we have believed in our Lord: may He forgive us our faults, and the magic to which thou didst compel us:(2596) for Allah is Best and Most Abiding."

2596 The magic, mummery, and deceptions which pertained to Egyptian Pagan religion became a creed, a State article of faith, to which all citizens were compelled to bow, and to which its priests were compelled actively to practise. And Pharaoh was at the head of the whole system—the high priest or the supreme god. With justice, therefore, do the converted magicians lay the blame on Pharaoh, effectively negativing Pharaoh's disingenuous charge that they had been in league with Moses. These falsehoods and deceptions—combined in many cases with horrid cruelties, open and secret— *we* common to many Pagan systems. Some of them have been investigated in detail in Sir John G. Frazer's Golden *Bough.*

74. Verily he who comes(2597) to his Lord as a sinner (at Judgment),- for him is Hell: therein shall he neither die nor live.

2597 The verses 20:74-76 are best construed as comments on the story of the converted Egyptians who had "purified themselves (from evil)". But some construe them as a continuation of their speech.

75. But such as come to Him as Believers who have worked righteous deeds,- for them are ranks exalted,-

76. Gardens of Eternity, beneath which flow rivers: they will dwell therein for aye: such is the reward of those who purify themselves (from evil).(2598)

2598 As the Egyptian magicians had done when they confessed the One True God.

77. We sent an inspiration(2599) to Moses: "Travel by night with My servants, and strike a dry path for them through the sea, without fear of being overtaken (by Pharaoh) and without (any other) fear."

2599 Time passes and at last Moses is commanded to leave Egypt with his people by night. They were cross the Red Sea into the Sinai Peninsula . They were told to have no fear of Pharaoh or of the sea or of t he unknown desert country of Sinai into which they were going. They crossed dry-shod, while Pharaoh, who came in pursuit with his troops, was overwhelmed by the sea. He and his men all perished. There is no emphasis on this episode here. But the emphasis is laid on the hard task which Moses had with his own people after he had delivered them from the Egyptian bondage.

78. Then Pharaoh pursued them with his forces, but the waters completely overwhelmed them and covered them up.

79. Pharaoh led his people astray instead of leading them aright.(2600)

2600 It is the duty of kings and leaders to give the right lead to their people. Instead of that, the evil ones among them lead them astray, and are the cause of the whole of a people perishing *(Cf.* 6:123 and 37:24-33).

80. O ye Children of Israel! We delivered you from your enemy, and We made a Covenant with you on the right side of(2601) Mount (Sinai), and We sent down to you Manna and quails:

2601 *Right side: Cf.* 19:52, and n. 2504, towards the end. The Arabian side of Sinai (Jabal Musa) was the place where Moses first received his commission before going to Egypt , and also where he received the Law after the Exodus from Egypt .

81. (Saying): "Eat of the good(2602) things We have provided for your sustenance, but commit no excess therein, lest My Wrath should justly descend on you: and those on whom descends My Wrath do perish indeed!(2603)

2602 *Cf.* 2:57 and n. 71; and 7:160.1 should like to construe this not only literally but also metaphorically-'Allah has looked after you and saved you. He has given you ethical and spiritual guidance. Enjoy the fruits of all this, but do not become puffed up and rebellious (another meaning in the root Tagha): otherwise the Wrath of Allah is sure to descend on you.'

2603 This gives the keynote to Moser's constant tussle with his own people, and introduces immediate y afterwards the incident of the golden calf.

82. "But, without doubt, I am (also) He that forgives again and again, to those who repent, believe, and do right, who,- in fine, are ready to receive true guidance."

83. (When Moses was up on the Mount,(2604) Allah said:) "What made thee hasten in advance of thy people, O Moses?"

2604 This was when Moses was up on the Mount for forty days and forty nights: 2:51 and n. 66. Moses had left the elders of Israel with Aaron behind him: Exod. 24:14. While he was in a state of ecstatic honour on the Mount, his people were enacting strange scenes down below. They were tested and tried, and they failed in the trial. They made a golden image of a calf for worship, as described below. See also 7:148-150 and notes-

84. He replied: "Behold, they are close on my footsteps: I hastened to thee, O my Lord, to please thee."

85. (Allah) said: "We have tested thy people in thy absence: the Samiri has led them(2605) astray."

2605 Who was this Samin ? If it was his personal name, it was sufficiently near the meaning of the original root word to have the definite article attached to it: *Cf. the* name of the caliph Mu'tasim (Al-Mu'tasim). What was the root for "Samiri"? If we look to old Egyptian, we have *Shemer* = A stranger, foreigner (Sir E. A. Wallis Budge's *Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary.* 1920, p. 815 *b).* As the Israelites had just left Egypt , they might quite well have among them an Egyptianised Hebrew bearing that nickname. That the name *Shemer* was subsequently not unknown among the Hebrews is clear from the Old Testament. In I Kings, 16:24 we read that Omri, king of Israel, the northern portion of the divided kingdom, who reigned about 903-896 B.C., built a new city, Samaria, on a hill which he bought from Shemer, the owner of the hill, for two talents of silver. See also Renan: *History of Israel ,* 2:210. For a further discussion of the word, see n. 2608 below.

86. So Moses returned to his people in a state of indignation and sorrow. He said: "O my people! did not your Lord make a handsome(2606) promise to you? Did then the promise seem to you long (in coming)? Or did ye desire that Wrath should descend from your Lord on you, and so ye broke your promise to me?"

2606 There are two promises referred to in this verse, the promise of Allah and the promise of the people of Israel . They form one Covenant, which was entered into through their leader Moses. See 20:80, and 2:63, n. 78. Allah's promise was to protect them and lead them to the Promised Land, and their promise was to obey Allah's Law and His commandments.

87. They said: "We broke not the promise to thee, as far as lay in our power: but we were made to carry the weight of the ornaments(2607) of the (whole) people, and we threw them (into the fire), and that was what the Samiri suggested.(2608)

2607 *Cf.* Exod. 12:35-36: the Israelites, before they left Egypt , borrowed from the Egyptians 'jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment"; and "they spoiled the Egyptians" *i.e.,* stripped them of all their valuable jewelry. Note that the answer of the backsliders is disingenuous in various ways. (1) The Samiri was no doubt responsible for suggesting the making of the golden calf, but they could not on that account disclaim responsibility for themselves ; the burden of the sin is on him who commits it, and he cannot pretend that he was powerless to avoid it. (2) At most the weight of the gold they carried could not have been heavy even if one or two men carried it, but would have been neglible if distributed. (3) Gold is valuable, and it is not likely that if they wanted to disburden themselves of it, they had any need to light a furnace, melt it, and cast it into the shape of a calf.

2608 See n. 2605 about the Samiri. If the Egyptian origin of the root is not accepted, we have a Hebrew origin in "Shomer" a guard, watchman, sentinel; allied to the Arabic *Samara, yasmuru,* to keep awake by night, to converse by night: *samir,* one who keeps awake by night. The Samiri may have been a watchman, in fact or by nickname *(Cf.* n. 2917).

88. "Then he brought out (of the fire) before the (people) the image of a calf:(2609) It seemed to low:(2610) so they said: This is your god, and the god of Moses, but (Moses) has forgotten!"(2611)

2609 See n. 1113 to 7:148, where the same words are used and explained.

2610 Seen. 1114 to 7:148.

2611 *Moses has forgotten: i.e.,* 'forgotten both us and his god. He has been gone for so many days. He is searching for a god on the Mount when his god is really here!' This is spoken by the Samiri and his partisans, but the people as a whole accepted it, and it therefore becomes their speech.

89. Could they not see that it could not return them a word (for answer), and that it had no power either to harm them or to do them good?(2612)

2612 This is a parenthetical comment. How blind the people were! They had seen Signs of the True Living God, and yet they were willing to worship a dead image! The True Living God had spoken in definite words of command, while this calf could only emit some sounds of lowing, which were themselves contrived by the fraud of the priests. This image could do neither good nor harm, while Allah was the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Universe, Whose Mercy was unbounded and Whose Wrath was terrible.

90. Aaron had already, before this said to them: "O my people! ye are being tested in this:(2613) for verily your Lord is ((Allah)) Most Gracious; so follow me and obey my command."(2614)

2613 "Resist this temptation: you are being tested in this. Do not follow after the semi-Egyptian Samiri, but obey me."

2614 The Bible story makes Aaron the culprit, which is inconsistent with his office as the high priest of Allah and the right hand of Moses. See n. 1116 to 7:150. Our version is more consistent, and explains, through the example of the Samiri, the lingering influences of the Egyptian cult of Osiris the bull-god.

91. They had said:(2615) "We will not abandon this cult, but we will devote ourselves to it until Moses returns to us."(2616)

2615 Obviously Aaron's speech in the last verse, and the rebels' defiance in this verse, were spoken before the return of Moses from the Mount.

2616 The rebels had so little faith that they had given Moses up for lost, and never expected to see him again.

92. (Moses) said: "O Aaron! what kept thee back, when thou sawest them going wrong,

93. "From following me? Didst thou then disobey my order?"(2617)

2617 Moses, when he came back, was full of anger and grief. His speech to Aaron is one of rebuke, and he was also inclined to handle him roughly: see next verse. The order he refers to is that stated in 7:142. "Act for me amongst my people: do right, and follow not the way of those who do mischief."

94. (Aaron) replied: "O son of my mother! Seize (me) not by my beard nor by (the hair of) my head!(2618) Truly I feared lest thou shouldst say, ´Thou has caused a division among the children of Israel, and thou didst not respect my word!´"(2619)

2618 *Cf.* 7:150.

2619 This reply of Aaron's is in no way inconsistent with the reply as noted in 7:150. On the contrary, there is a dramatic aptness in the different points emphasised on each occasion. In S. 7 we were discussing the Ummah of Israel, and Aaron rightly says: "The people did indeed reckon me as naught, and went near to slay me!" In adding, "Let not the enemies rejoice over my misfortune" he is referring by implication to his brother's wish to maintain unity among the people. Here the unity is the chief point to emphasise: we are dealing with the SamirT as mischief-monger, and he could best be dealt with by Moses, who proceeds to do so.

95. (Moses) said: "What then is thy case, O Samiri?"(2620)

2620 Moses now turns to the Samiri, and the Samiri's reply in the next verse sums up his character in a few wonderful strokes of character-painting. The lesson of the whole of this episode is the fall of a human soul that nominally comes to Allah's Truth in a humble position but makes mischief when and as it finds occasion. It is no less dangerous and culpable than the arrogant soul, typified by pharaoh, which gets into high places and makes its leadership the cause of ruin of a whole nation.

96. He replied: "I saw what they saw not: so I took a handful (of dust) from the footprint of the Messenger, and threw it (into the calf): thus did my soul suggest to me."(2621)

2621 This answer of the Samiri is a fine example of unblushing effrontery, careful evasion of issues, and invented falsehoods. He takes upon himself to pretend that he had far more insight than anybody else: he saw what the vulgar crowd did not see. He saw something supernatural. "The Messenger" is construed by many Commentators to mean the angel Gabriel. *Rasul* (plural, *rusul)* is used in several places for "angels" *e.g.,* in 11:69, 77; 19:19; and 35:1. But if we take it to mean the Messenger Moses, it means that the Samiri saw something sacred or supernatural in his footprints: perhaps he thinks a little flattery would make Moses forgive him. The dust became sacred, and his throwing it into the calf s image made the calf utter a lowing sound! As if that was the point at issue! He does not answer the charge of making an image for worship. But finally, with arrogant effrontery, he says, "Well, that is what my soul suggested to me, and that should be enough!"

97. (Moses) said: "Get thee gone! but thy (punishment) in this life will be that thou wilt say,(2622) ´touch me not´; and moreover (for a future penalty) thou hast a promise that will not fail:(2623) Now look at thy god, of whom thou hast become a devoted worshipper: We will certainly (melt) it in a blazing fire and scatter it broadcast in the sea!"(2624)

2622 He and his kind were to become social lepers, untouchables; perhaps also sufficiently arrogant to hold others at arm's length, and say *"Noli me tangere"* (touch me not).

2623 Namely, the promised Wrath of Allah: see 20:81; 89:25.

2624 The cast effigy was re-melted and destroyed. Thus ends the Samiri's story, of which the lessons are indicated n. 2620 above. It may be interesting to pursue the transformations of the word Samiri in later times. For its origin see notes 2605 and 2608 above. Whether the root of Samiri was originally Egyptian or Hebrew does not affect the later history. Four facts may be noted. (1) There was a man bearing a name of that kind at the time of Moses, and he led a revolt against Moses and was cursed by Moses. (2) In the time of King Omri (903-896 B.C.) of the northern kingdom of Israel , there was a man called Shemer, from whom, according to the Bible, was bought a hill on which was built the new capital of the kingdom, the town of Samaria . (3) The name of the hill was *Shomer (=* watchman, vigilant guardian), and that form of the name also appears as the name of a man (see 2 Kings 22:21); some authorities think the town was called after the hill and not after the man (Hastings 's *Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics),* but this is, for our present purposes, immaterial. (4) There was and is a dissenting community of Israelites called Samaritans, who have their own separate Pentateuch and Targum, who claim to be the true Children of Israel, and who hold the Orthodox Jews in contempt as the latter hold them in contempt: they claim to be the true guardians *(Shomerim)* of the Law, and that is probably the true origin of the name Samaritan, which may go further back in time than the foundation of the town of Samaria. I think it is probable that the schism originated from the time of Moses, and that the curse of Moses on the Samiri explains the position.

98. But the god of you all is the One Allah. there is no god but He: all things He comprehends in His knowledge.

99. Thus do We relate to thee some stories of what happened before: for We have sent thee a Message from Our own Presence.(2625)

2625 Thus superseding previous revelations; for this (the Qur'an) is direct from Allah, and is not a secondhand exposition on other men's authority.

100. If any do turn away therefrom, verily they will bear a burden on the Day of judgment;

101. They will abide in this (state): and grievous will the burden(2626) be to them on that Day,-

2626 *Cf.* 6:31. If people are so immersed in the evanescent falsehoods of this life to turn away from the True and the Eternal, they will have a rude awakening when the Judgement comes. These very things that they thought so enjoyable here—taking advantage of others, material self-indulgence, nursing grievances instead of doing good, etc., etc.—will he a grievous burden to them that day, which they will not be able to escape or lighten.

102. The Day when the Trumpet will be sounded: that Day, We shall gather the sinful, blear-eyed (with terror).(2627)

2627 *Zurqa* = having eyes different from normal colour, which in the East is black and white: having blue eyes, or eyes afflicted with dimness or blindness, or squint; hence metaphorically, blear-eyed (with terror).

103. In whispers will they consult each other: "Yet tarried not longer than ten (Days);(2628)

2628 Faced with eternity, they will realise that their life on this earth, or the interval between their sin and their punishment, had a duration which practically amounted to nothing. They express this by the phrase "ten days", but their wiser heads think that even this is an over-estimate. It was but a brief day!

104. We know best what they will say, when their leader(2629) most eminent in conduct will say: "Ye tarried not longer than a day!"

2629 *Cf.* 20:63 and n. 2587. Note that it is the shrewdest and most versed in Life who will say this, because they will be the first to see the true situation.

105. They ask thee concerning(2630) the Mountains: say, "My Lord will uproot them and scatter them as dust;(2631)

2630 In the last verse, it was the deceptiveness and relativity of Time that was dealt with. Here we come to the question of space, solidity, bulk. The question was actually put to the Holy Prophet: what will become of the solid Mountains, or in the English phrase, "the eternal hills'? They are no more substantial than anything else in this temporal world. When the "new world", (13:5) of which Unbelievers doubted, is actually in being, the mountains will cease to exist. We can imagine the scene of judgement as a level plain, in which there are no ups and downs and no places of concealment. All is straight and level, without corners, mysteries, or lurking doubts.

2631 The one word *nasafa* carries the ideas of (1) tearing up by the roots, (2) scattering like chaff or dust, and (3) winnowing. Its twofold repetition here intensifies the meaning.

106. "He will leave them as plains smooth and level;

107. "Nothing crooked or curved wilt thou see in their place."

108. On that Day will they follow the Caller(2632) (straight): no crookedness (can they show) him: all sounds(2633) shall humble themselves in the Presence of (Allah) Most Gracious: nothing shalt thou hear but the tramp of their feet (as they march).

2632 *The. Caller,* the angel whose voice will call and direct all souls. (R).

2633 A beautiful personification of hushed Sound. First there is the loud blast of the Trumpet. Then mere is the stillness and hush of awe and reverence: only the tramp of the ranks marching along will be heard. (R).

109. On that Day shall no intercession avail except for those for whom(2634) permission has been granted by ((Allah)) Most Gracious and whose word is acceptable to Him.

2634 *Cf.* 2:255 in the Verse of the Throne. Here *man* is in the accusative case governed by *tanfa'u,* and it is better to construe as I have done. That is, intercession will benefit no one except those for whom Allah has granted permission, and whose word (of repentance) is true and sincere, and therefore acceptable to Allah. Others construe; no intercession will avail, except by those to whom Allah has granted permission, and whose word (of intercession) is acceptable to Allah *(Cf.* 21:28 and 34:23). In that case the two different clauses have no distinct meanings.

110. He knows what (appears to His creatures as) before or after or behind them:(2635) but they shall not compass it with their knowledge.

2635 *Cf.* 2:255 and n. 297. The slight difference in phraseology (which I have tried to preserve in the Translation) will be understood as beauty when we reflect that here our attention is directed to the Day of Judgement, and in 2:255 the wording is general, and applies to our present state also.

111. (All) faces shall be humbled before (Him) - the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal: hopeless indeed will be the man that carries iniquity (on his back).(2636)

2636 The metaphor of the burden of sin which the unjust carry on their backs is referred to in 20:100-101 (see n. 2626), in 6:31, and in other passages. Note that *all* faces, those of the just as well as of the unjust, will be humbled before Allah: the best of us can claim no merit equal to Allah's Grace. But the just will have Hope: while the unjust, now that the curtain of Reality has risen, will be in absolute Despair!

112. But he who works deeds of righteousness, and has faith, will have no fear of harm nor of any curtailment(2637) (of what is his due).

2637 See the last note. Unlike the unjust, the righteous, who have come with Faith, will now find their Faith justified: not only will they be free from any fear of harm, but they will be rewarded to the full, or, as has been said in other passages, where His bounty rather than His justice is emphasised, they will get more than their due reward (3:27; 39:10).

113. Thus have We sent this down - an arabic Qur´an - and explained therein in detail some of the warnings, in order that they may fear Allah, or that it may cause their remembrance (of Him).(2638)

2638 The Qur'an is in clear Arabic, so that even an unlearned people like the Arabs might understand and profit by its warnings, and the rest of the world may learn through them, as they did in the first few centuries of Islam and may do again when we Muslims show ourselves worthy to explain and exemplify its meaning. The evil are warned that they may repent: the good are confirmed in their Faith and strengthened by their remembrance of Him.

114. High above all is Allah, the King, the Truth! Be not in haste with the Qur´an before its revelation to thee(2639) is completed, but say, "O my Lord! advance me in knowledge."

2639 Allah is above every human event or desire. His purpose is universal. But He is the Truth, the absolute Truth: and His kingdom is the true kingdom, that can carry out His will. That Truth unfolds itself gradually, as it did in the gradual revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet. But even after it was completed in a volume, its true meaning and purpose only gradually unfold themselves to any given individual or nation. No one should be impatient about it On the contrary, we should always pray for increase in our own knowledge, which can never at any given moment be complete *(Cf.* 75:16).

115. We had already, beforehand,(2640) taken the covenant of Adam, but he forgot: and We found on his part no firm resolve.

2640 The spiritual fall of two individual souls, Pharaoh and the Samiri, having been referred to, the one through overweening arrogance, and the other through a spirit of mischief and false harking back to the past, our attention is now called to the prototype of Evil who tempted Adam, the original Man, and to the fact that though man was clearly warned that Evil is his enemy and will effect his ruin, he showed so little firmness that he succumbed to it at once at the first opportunity.

116. When We said to the angels, "Prostrate yourselves to Adam", they prostrated themselves, but not Iblis: he refused.

117. Then We said: "O Adam! verily, this is an enemy to thee and thy wife: so let him not get you both out of the Garden, so that thou art landed in misery.(2641)

2641 See last note. The story is referred to, in order to draw attention to man's folly in rushing into the arms of Evil, through he had been clearly forewarned.

118. "There is therein (enough provision) for thee not to go hungry(2642) nor to go naked,

2642 Not only had the warning been given that Evil is an enemy to man and will effect his destruction, but it was clearly pointed out that all his needs were being met in the Garden of Happiness . Food and clothing, drink and shelter, were amply provided for.

119. "Nor to suffer from thirst, nor from the sun´s heat."

120. But Satan whispered evil to him: he said, "O Adam! shall I lead thee to the Tree of Eternity(2643) and to a kingdom that never decays?"

2643 The suggestion of the Evil One is clever, as it always is: it is false, and at the same time plausible. It is false, because (1) that felicity was not temporary, like the life of this world, and (2) they were supreme in the Garden, and a "kingdom" such as was dangled before them would only add to their sorrows. It was plausible, because (1) nothing had been said to them about Eternity, as the opposite of Eternity was not yet known, and (2) the sweets of Power arise from the savour of Self, and Self is an alluring (if false) attraction that misleads the Will.

121. In the result, they both ate of the tree, and so their nakedness appeared(2644) to them: they began to sew together, for their covering, leaves from the Garden: thus did Adam disobey his Lord, and allow himself(2645) to be seduced.

2644 Hitherto they were clothed in the garb of Innocence and knew no evil. Now, when disobedience to Allah had sullied their soul and torn off the garment of their Innocence, their sullied Self appeared to themselves in all its nakedness and ugliness, and they had to resort to external things (leaves of the Garden) to cover the shame of their self-consciousness.

2645 Adam had been given the will to choose, and he chose wrongly, and was about to be lost in the throng of the evil ones, when Allah's Grace came to his aid. His repentance was accepted, and Allah chose him for His Mercy, as stated in the next verse.

122. But his Lord chose him (for His Grace): He turned to him, and gave him Guidance.

123. He said: "Get ye down, both of you,- all together,(2646) from the Garden, with enmity one to another: but if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from Me, whosoever follows My Guidance, will not lose his way, nor fall(2647) into misery.

2646 The little variations between this passage and 2:38 are instructive, as showing how clearly the particular argument is followed in each case. Here *ihbita* ('get ye down') is in the dual number, and refers to the two individual souls, our common ancestors: in 2:38 *ihbitu* is in the plural number, to include all mankind and Satan, for the argument is about the collective life of man. On the other hand, "all together" includes Satan, the spirit of evil, and the enmity "one to another" refers to the eternal feud between Man and Satan, between our better nature and Evil.

2647 For the same reason as in the last note, we have the consequences of Guidance to the individual, *viz.:* being saved from going astray or from falling into misery and despair. In 2:38, the consequences expressed, though they apply to the individual, are also appropriate taken collectively: "on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

124. "But whosoever turns away from My Message, verily for him is a life narrowed down, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day(2648) of Judgment."

2648 Again, as in the last two verses, there is a variation from the previous passage (2:39). The consequences of the rejection of Allah's guidance are here expressed more individually: a life narrowed down, and a blindness that will persist beyond this life. "A life narrowed down" has many implications: (1) it is a life from which all the beneficent influences of Allah's wide world are excluded; (2) it is a life for Self, not for all; (3) in looking exclusively to the "good things" of this life, it misses the true Reality.

125. He will say: "O my Lord! why hast Thou raised me up blind, while I had sight (before)?"(2649)

2649 Because Allah gave him physical sight in this life for trial, he thinks he should be favoured in the real world, the world that matters! He misused the physical sight and made himself blind for the other world,

126. (Allah) will say: "Thus didst Thou, when Our Signs came unto thee, disregard them: so wilt thou, this day, be disregarded."(2650)

2650 You were deliberately blind to Allah's Signs: now you will not see Allah's favours, and will be excluded from his Grace.'

127. And thus do We recompense him who transgresses beyond bounds and believes not in the Sings of his Lord: and the Penalty of the Hereafter is far more grievous and more enduring.(2651)

2651 Blindness in the world of enduring Reality is far worse than physical blindness in the world of probation.

128. Is it not a warning to such men (to call to mind) how many generations before them We destroyed, in whose haunts they (now) move? Verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding.(2652)

2652 *Cf.* 20:54. This phrase concluded the argument of Moses with Pharaoh about Pharaoh's blindness to Allah and the Signs of Allah. Now it concludes the more general argument about men, concerning whom the saying arose: 'none are so blind as those who *will not* see.'

129. Had it not been for a Word that went forth before from thy Lord,(2653) (their punishment) must necessarily have come; but there is a Term appointed (for respite).

2653 C/10:19 and n. 1407: also 11:110. In Allah's Holy Plan and Purpose, there is a wise adjustment of all interests, and a merciful chance and respite given to all, the unjust as well as the just, and His decree or word abides. The most wicked have a term appointed for them for respite. Had it not been so, the punishment must necessarily have descended on them immediately for their evil deeds.

130. Therefore be patient with what they say, and celebrate (constantly)(2654) the praises of thy Lord, before the rising of the sun, and before its setting; yea, celebrate them for part of the hours of the night, and at the sides(2655) of the day: that thou mayest have (spiritual) joy.

2654 All good men must be patient with what seems to them evil around them. That does not mean that they should sit still and do nothing to destroy evil; for the fight against evil is one of the cardinal points of Islam. What they are told is that they must not be impatient: they must pray to Allah and commune with Him, so that their patience and faith may be strengthened, and they may be able the better to grapple with evil. For they thus not only get strength but inward spiritual joy.

2655 *Taraf,* plural *atraf,* may mean sides, ends, extremities. If the day be compared to a tubular figure standing erect, the top and bottom are clearly marked, but the sides are not so clearly marked: they would be *atraf* (plural), not *tarafayn* (dual). Now the prayer before sunrise is clearly *Fajr t* that before sunset is 'Asr: "part of the hours of the night" would indicate *Maghrib* (early night, just after sunset), and 'Isha, before going to bed. There is left *Zuhr,* which is the indefinite side or middle of the day; it may be soon after the sun's decline from noon, but there is considerable latitude about the precise hour. The majority of Commentators interpret in favour of the five Canonical prayers, and some include optional prayers. But I think the words are even more comprehensive. A good man's life is all one sweet Song of Praise to Allah *(Cf.* 3521)-

131. Nor strain thine eyes in longing for the things We have given for enjoyment to parties of them, the splendour of the life of this world, through which We test them: but the provision of thy Lord(2656) is better and more enduring.

2656 The good things of this life make a brave show, but they are as nothing compared with the good of the Hereafter. Both are provided by Allah, but the former are given to the just and the unjust as a test and trial, and in any case will pass away: while the latter come especially from Allah for his devoted servants, and are incomparably of more value and will last through eternity.

132. Enjoin prayer on thy people, and be constant therein. We ask thee not to provide(2657) sustenance: We provide it for thee. But the (fruit of) the Hereafter is for righteousness.

2657 Sustenance, in the sense of the ordinary needs of life, the man of Allah does not worry about. That is provided by Allah for all, the just and the unjust. But the special provision, the real Sustenance, the spiritual fruit, is for a righteous life in the service of Allah.

133. They say: "Why does he not(2658) bring us a sign from his Lord?" Has not a Clear Sign come to them of all that was in the former Books of revelation?

2658 The question or plea of the Unbelievers is disingenuous. Many Signs have come with this Revelation. But the one that should have appealed to those who believed in former revelations and should have convinced them was what was in their own books.

134. And if We had inflicted on them a penalty before this,(2659) they would have said: "Our Lord! If only Thou hadst sent us a messenger, we should certainly have followed Thy Signs before we were humbled and put to shame."

2659 If the Signs mentioned in the last note did not convince them, it would mean that they were not true to their own faith. They were not straight with themselves. Injustice they should have been punished for their falsehood. But they were given further respite. Or they would again have argued in a circle, and said: "If only Allah had sent us a living messenger we should have believed!" The living messenger they flout because they want a Sign. The Sign they wish to ignore, because they want a living messenger!

135. Say: "Each one (of us) is waiting: wait ye, therefore,(2660) and soon shall ye know who it is that is on the straight and even(2661) way, and who it is that has received Guidance."

2660 If people will not be true to their own lights, what further argument is left? The Prophet of Allah can only say: "Let us wait the isuse; my faith tells me that Allah's Truth must prevail." *Cf.* 9:52. (R).

2661 *Cf.* 19:43. The straight and even Way must endure, and show that the man who follows it has received true guidance. All falsehood and crookedness must ultimately disappear



21. Al Anbiya' (The Prophets)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Closer and closer to mankind(2662) comes their Reckoning: yet they heed not and they turn away.

2662 Every minute sees them nearer to their doom, and yet they are sadly heedless, and even actively turn away from the Message that would save them.

2. Never comes (aught) to them of a renewed Message(2663) from their Lord, but they listen to it as in jest,-

2663 In each age, when the Message of Allah is renewed, the very people who should have known better and welcomed the renewal and the sweeping away of human cobwebs, either receive it with amused self-superiority, which later turns into active hostility, or with careless indifference.

3. Their hearts toying as with trifles. The wrong-doers conceal(2664) their private counsels, (saying), "Is this (one) more than a man like yourselves? Will ye go to witchcraft with your eyes open?"(2665)

2664 Allah's Message is free and open, in the full light of day. His enemies plot against it in secrecy, lest their own false motives be exposed. Their jealousy prevents them from accepting a "man like themselves" as a teacher or warner or guide.

2665 Literally, "in a state in which you (actually) see (that it is witchcraft)". When Allah's Messenger is proved to be above them in moral worth, in true insight, in earnestness and power of eloquence, they accuse him of witchcraft, a word which may mean nothing, or perhaps some mysterious deceitful arts.

4. Say:(2666) "My Lord knoweth (every) word (spoken)(2667) in the heavens and on earth: He is the One that heareth and knoweth (all things)."

2666 Notice that in the usual Arabic texts (that is, according to the *Qira'ah* of *Hafs)* the word *qala* is here and in 21:112 below, as well as in 23:112, spelt differently from the usual spelling of the word in other places *(e.g.,* in 20:125-126). *Qul is* the reading of the *Basrah Qira'ah,* meaning, "Say thou" in the imperative. If we construe "he says", the pronoun refers to "this (one)" in the preceding verse, *viz.:* the Prophet. But more than one Commentator understands the meaning in the imperative, and I agree with them. The point is merely one of verbal construction. The meaning is the same in either case. See n. 2948 to 23:112. (R).

2667 Every word, whether whispered in secret (as in 21:3 above) or spoken openly, is known to Allah. Let not the wrongdoers imagine that their secret plots are secret to the Knower of all things.

5. "Nay," they say, "(these are) medleys of dream! - Nay, He forged it! - Nay, He is (but) a poet!(2668) Let him then bring us a Sign like the ones that were sent to (Prophets) of old!"

2668 The charges against Allah's inspired Messenger are heaped up "Magic!" says one: that means, "We don't understand it!" Says another, "Oh! but we know! he is a mere dreamer of confused dreams!" If the "dreams" fit in with real things and vital experience, another will suggest, "Oh yes! why drag in supernatural agencies? he is clever enough to forge it himself!" Or another suggests, "He is a poet! Poets can invent things and say them in beautiful words!" Another interposes, "What we should like to see is miracles, like those we read of in stories of the Prophets of old!"

6. (As to those) before them, not one of the populations which We destroyed believed: will these believe?(2669)

2669 'If such miracles as you read of failed to convince Unbelievers of old, what chance is there that these Unbelievers will believe? Miracles may come, but they are not cures for Unbelief.'

7. Before thee, also, the messengers We sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration: If ye realise this not, ask of those who possess the Message.(2670)

2670 See 16:43 and n. 2069. This answers the Unbelievers' taunt, "he is just a man like ourselves!" True, but all messengers sent by Allah were men, not angels or another kind of beings, who could not understand men or whom men could not understand.

8. Nor did We give them bodies that ate no food, nor were they exempt from death.(2671)

2671 As men they were subject to the laws governing the physical bodies of men. They ate and drank, and their bodies perished in death *(Cf.* 7:148 and 25:7).

9. In the end We fulfilled to them Our Promise, and We saved them and those whom We pleased, but We destroyed those who transgressed beyond bounds.(2672)

2672 But, however difficult (or impossible) their mission may have appeared to them, or to the world at first, they won through eventually, even those who *seemed* to have been defeated. Examples are given in the latter part of this Surah, especially in 21:51 -93. They were delivered from the Wrath which overtook the Unbelievers, as were those with them who accepted Allah's Message and placed themselves in conformity with His Will and Plan. That is the meaning of "whom We pleased".

10. We have revealed for you (O men!) a book in which is a Message for you: will ye not then understand?

11. How many were the populations We utterly destroyed because of their iniquities, setting up in their places other peoples?

12. Yet, when they felt Our Punishment (coming), behold, they (tried to) flee from it.(2673)

2673 When they had every chance of repentance and reform, they rejected Allah's Message, and perhaps even put up an open defiance. When they actually began to feel the Wrath coming, they began to flee, but it was too late! Besides, where could they flee to from the Wrath of Allah? Hence the ironical appeal to them in the next verse: better go pack your luxuries and what you thought were your permanent homes! *Cf.* Christ's saying in the present Gospel of St. Matthew (3:7): "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the Wrath to come?"

13. Flee not, but return to the good things of this life which were given you, and to your homes in order that ye may be called to account.(2674)

2674 See last note. 'You thought your homes so comfortable: why don't you go back to them? You will be called to account. Perhaps there may be rewards to be given you, who knows?' This irony is itself the beginning of the Punishment, but the ungodly now see how wrong they had been. But their sighs and regrets now avail them nothing. It is too late. They are lost, and nothing can save them.

14. They said: "Ah! woe to us! We were indeed wrong-doers!"

15. And that cry of theirs ceased not, till We made them as a field that is mown, as ashes silent and quenched.(2675)

2675 The two similies present two different aspects of the lamentations of the ungodly. When they really see the Wrath to come, there is a stampede, but where can they go to? Their lamentation is now the only mark of their life. But it dies away, as corn vanished from a field that is being mown, or as a dying fire is slowly extinguished! They do not die. They wish they were dead! (*Cf.* 36:29 and 78:40).

16. Not for (idle) sport did We(2676) create the heavens and the earth and all that is between!

2676 The Hindu doctrine of Lila, that alt things were created for sport, is here negatived. But more: with Allah we must not associate any ideas but those of Truth. Righteousness, Mercy, Justice, and the other attributes implied in His Beautiful Names. He does not jest nor play with His creatures *(Cf.* 51:56).

17. If it had been Our wish to take (just) a pastime, We should surely have taken it from the things nearest to Us, if We would do (such a thing)!(2677)

2677 If such an idea as that of play or pastime had been possible with regard to Allah, and if He had wished really to indulge in pastime, He would have done it with creatures of Light nearest to Him, not with the lowly material creation that we see around us *(Cf,* 41:47).

18. Nay, We hurl the Truth against falsehood, and it knocks out its brain, and behold, falsehood doth perish! Ah! woe be to you for the (false) things ye ascribe (to Us).(2678)

2678 Such as that (1) Allah has partners (21:22), or (2) that He has gotten a son (21:26), or (3) has daughters (16:57), or any other superstitions derogatory to the dignity and glory of Allah.

19. To Him belong all (creatures) in the heavens and on earth: Even those who are in His (very) Presence are not(2679) too proud to serve Him, nor are they (ever) weary (of His service):

2679 The pure angelic hosts, whom we imagine to be glorious creatures of light, high in the spiritual world, near the Throne of Allah Himself, are yet His creatures, and serve Him without ceasing, and are proud to do so. Such is the majesty of Allah Most High.

20. They celebrate His praises night and day, nor do they ever flag or intermit.

21. Or have they taken (for worship) gods from the earth(2680) who can raise (the dead)?(2681)

2680 The different kinds of false gods whom people raise from their imagination are now referred to. In verses 21-23, the reference is to the gods of the earth, whether idols or local godlings, or deified heroes, or animals or trees or forces of the nature around us, which men have from time to time worshipped. These, as deities, have not life except what their worshippers give them.

2681 The answer of course is "no". No one but Allah can raise the dead to life. The miracle in the story of Jesus (3:49 and 5:112-115) was "by Allah's leave' 1 . It was a miracle of Allah, not one of Jesus by his own power or will.

22. If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods(2682) besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both! but glory to Allah, the Lord of the Throne: (High is He) above what they attribute to Him!

2682 After the false gods of the earth (verse 21), are mentioned the false gods in the heavens and the earth, like those in the Greek Pantheon (verse 22), who quarrelled and fought and slandered each other and made their Olympus a perfect bear-garden!

23. He cannot be questioned for His acts, but they(2683) will be questioned (for theirs).

2683 Allah is Self-Subsisting. All His creatures are responsible to Him and dependent on Him. There is no other being to whom He can be responsible or on whom He can be dependent.

24. Or have they taken for worship (other) gods(2684) besides him? Say, "Bring your convincing proof: this is the Message of those with me and the Message of those before me."(2685) But most of them know not the Truth, and so turn away.

2684 See above, n. 2682, where two kinds of false worship are noted. Now we are warned against a third danger, the worship of false gods of any sort. Pagan man is prolific of creating abstract images for worship, including Self or abstract

Intelligence or Power. In verse 26 below is mentioned a fourth kind of false worship, which imagines that Allah begets sons or daughters.

2685 This verse should be read with the next. All reason revolts against the idea of conflicting gods, and points to Unity in Creation and Unity in Godhead. This is not only the Message of Islam ("those with me") but the message of all prophets who came before the Holy Prophet Muhammad ("those before me"), and the line of prophets was closed with him. The Message given to every prophet in all ages was that of Unity as the fundamental basis of Order and Design in the world, material, moral, and spiritual.

25. Not a messenger did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me.

26. And they say: "((Allah)) Most Gracious has begotten(2686) offspring." Glory to Him! they are (but) servants raised to honour.

2686 This refers both to the Trinitarian superstition that Allah has begotten a son, and to the Arab superstition that the angels were daughters of Allah. All such superstitions are derogatory to the glory of Allah. The prophets and angels are no more than servants of Allah: they are raised high in honour, and therefore they deserve our highest respect, but not our worship.

27. They speak not before(2687) He speaks, and they act (in all things) by His Command.

2687 They never say anything before they receive Allah's command to say it, and their acts are similarly conditioned. This is also the teaching of Jesus as reported in the Gospel of St. John (12:49-50): "For I have not spoken of myself: but the Father which sent me. He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And 1 know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so 1 speak." If rightly understood, "Father" has the same meaning as our "Rabb", Sustainer and Cherisher, not Begetter or Progenitor.

28. He knows what is before them, and what is behind them, and they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable,(2688) and they(2689) stand in awe and reverence of His (Glory).

2688 *Cf.* 20:109. "Acceptable" means that they have conformed to the Will of Allah and obeyed His Law, thus winning the stamp of His approval.

2689 *They:* the usual interpretation refers the pronoun to the servants of Allah who intercede: it may also refer to those on whose behalf the intercession is made: they do not take it as a matter of course, but stand in due awe and reverence of Allah's great glory and mercy.

29. If any of them should say, "I am a god besides Him", such a one We should reward with Hell: thus do We reward those who do wrong.

30. Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one(2690) unit of creation), before we clove them asunder? We made from water(2691) every living thing. Will they not then believe?

2690 The evolution of the ordered worlds as we see them is hinted at. As man's intellectual gaze over the physical world expands, he sees more and more how Unity is the dominating note in Allah's wonderful Universe. Taking the solar system alone, we know that the maximum intensity of sun-spots corresponds with the maximum intensity of magnetic storms on this earth. The universal law of gravitation seems to bind all mass together. Physical facts point to the throwing off of planets from vast quantities of diffused nebular matter, of which the central condensed core is a sun.

2691 About 72 percent of the surface of our Globe is still covered with water, and it has been estimated that if the inequalities of the surface were all levelled, the whole surface would be under water, as the mean elevation of land sphere-level would be 7,000-10,000 feet below the surface of the ocean *(Cf.* 11:7). This shows the predominance of water on our Globe. That all life began in the water is also a conclusion to which our latest knowledge in biological science points. Apart from the fact that protoplasm, the original basis of living matter, is liquid or semi-liquid and in a state of constant flux and instability, there is the fact that land animals, like the higher vertebrates, including man, show, in their embryological history, organs like those of fishes, indicating the watery origin of their original habitat. The constitution of protoplasm is about 80 to 85 percent water (see also 24:30-31 and 24:45).

31. And We have set on the earth mountains standing firm,(2692) lest it should shake with them, and We have made therein broad highways (between mountains) for them to pass through: that they may receive Guidance.(2693)

2692 *Cf.* 16:15 and n. 2038. *Lest it should shake with them:* here "them" refers back to "they" at the end of the preceding verse, meaning "Unbelievers". It might be mankind in general, but the pointed address to those who do not realise and understand Allah's mercies is appropriate, to drive home to them the fact that it is Allah's well-ordered providence that protects them normally from cataclysms like earthquakes, but that they could for their iniquities be destroyed in an instant, as the 'Ad and the Thamud were destroyed before them. As pointed out in n. 2691 above, if the surface of the earth were levelled up, it would all be under water, and therefore the firm mountains are a further source of security for life which has evolved in terrestrial forms. Though the mountains may seem impassable barriers, yet Allah's providence has provided broad passes between them to afford highways for human communications (see also 27:61).

2693 In both the literal and the figurative sense. Literally, these natural mountain highways direct men in the way they should go. Figuratively, these wonderful instances of Allah's providence should turn men's thoughts to the true guidance of Allah in life and spiritual progress.

32. And We have made the heavens as a canopy well guarded:(2694) yet do they turn away from the Signs which these things (point to)!

2694 *Canopy well-guarded:* the heavens form a canopy that is secure from falling down: they also form a sublime spectacle and a Mystery that man can only faintly reach. Perhaps also the mystery of spiritual life is metaphorically hinted at *(Cf.* also 15:16-17).

33. It is He Who created the Night and the Day, and the sun and the moon: all (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its(2695) rounded course.

2695 I have indicated, unlike most translators, the metaphor of swimming implied in the original words: how beautiful it is to contemplate the heavenly bodies swimming through space (or ether) in their rounded courses before our gaze! *(Cf.* 36:40)

34. We granted not to any man before thee permanent life(2696) (here): if then thou shouldst die, would they live permanently?

2696 Life on this planet without death has not been granted to any man. The Khidhr legends are popular tales. His life without death on this earth is nowhere mentioned in the Qur'an. The taunt of the Unbelievers at the Holy Prophet was therefore futile. Could any of them live without death at some time or other? Could they name any one who did?

35. Every soul shall have a taste of death:(2697) and We test you by evil and by good by way of trial. to Us must ye return.

2697 *Cf.* 3:185, and n. 491, and 29:57. The soul does not die, but when it separates from the body at the death of the body, the soul gets a taste of death. In our life of probation on this earth, our virtue and faith are tested by many things: some are tested by calamities, and some by the good things of this life. If we prove our true mettle, we pass our probation with success. In any case all must return to Allah, and then will our life be appraised of its true value.

36. When the Unbelievers see thee, they treat thee not except with ridicule. "Is this," (they say), "the one who talks(2698) of your gods?" and they blaspheme at the mention of ((Allah)) Most Gracious!

2698 To the godly man the issue between false worship and true worship is a very serious matter. To the sceptics and unbelievers it is only a joke. They take it lightly, and laugh at the godly ones. They not only laugh at him, but they blaspheme when the name of the One True God is mentioned. The reply to this is in the next verse.

37. Man is a creature of haste:(2699) soon (enough) will I show you My Signs; then ye will not ask Me to hasten them!

2699 Haste is the very bone and marrow of man. If he is granted respite for his own sake, in order that he may have a further chance of repentance and coming back to Allah, he says impatiently and incredulously; "Bring on the Punishment quickly, that I may see if what you say is true!" Alas, it is too true! When the Punishment actually comes near and he sees it, he will not want it hastened. He will want more time and further delay! Poor creature of haste! *(Cf.* 75:20).

38. They say: "When will this promise come to pass, if ye are telling the truth?"

39. If only the Unbelievers(2700) knew (the time) when they will not be able to ward off the fire from their faces, nor yet from their backs, and (when) no help can reach them!

2700 They would not be so unreasonable if they only realised the terrible future for them! The Fire will envelop them on all sides, and no help will then be possible. Is it not best for them now to turn and repent? The Punishment may come too suddenly, as is said in the next verse.

40. Nay, it may come to them all of a sudden and confound them: no power will they have then to avert it, nor will they (then) get respite.

41. Mocked were (many) messenger before thee; But their scoffers were hemmed in by the thing that they mocked.(2701)

2701 The same verse occurs at 6:10, where see n. 843. 'What they are mocking at now will be in a position to mock them in due time.'

42. Say: "Who can keep you safe by night and by day from (the Wrath of) (Allah) Most Gracious?"(2702) Yet they turn away from the mention of their Lord.

2702 'Allah is most Gracious: if, in spite of His great mercy, you are so rebellious and depraved as to incur His Wrath, who is there who can save you? His Wrath can descend on you at any rime, by night or by day.'

43. Or have they gods that can guard them from Us? They have no power to aid themselves, nor can they be defended from Us.(2703)

2703 *Ashaba:* to join as a companion: with *'an* or *min* it has also the meaning of to defend or remove from someone. The full signification is best understood if paraphrased: 'they are not fit to be mentioned in the same breath with Us, nor can they be defended from Us.'

44. Nay, We gave the good things of this life to these men and their fathers until the period(2704) grew long for them; See they not that We(2705) gradually reduce the land (in their control) from its outlying borders? Is it then they who will win?

2704 *'Umr,* or *'Umur:* age, generation, period, time, life. Here "period" is most appropriate, as it covers many generations, "these men and their fathers."

2705 *Cf.* 13:41 and n. 1865. The particular signification is that Islam spread from the outer borders, social and geographical, gradually inwards. The social fringe was the humbler people, such as slaves and poor men. The geographical reference is to Madinah and tribes away from the Makkah centre. The proud and unbelieving Quraysh were the last to come in when the circle was gradually drawn tighter and tighter around them. The general signification applies to all times. Allah's Truth makes its way first among the poor and the lowly, those whose minds are unsoiled by prejudices of false pride or false knowledge, but it gradually hems in the obstinate, until it prevails in the end.

45. Say, "I do but warn you according to revelation": But the deaf will not hear the call, (even) when they are warned!(2706)

2706 According to the English saying, "none is so deaf as those who will not hear". When they deliberately shut their ears to the warning from the Merciful Allah, meant for their own good, the responsibility is their own. But their cowardice is shown in the next verse by their behaviour when the first breath of the Wrath reaches them.

46. If but a breath of the Wrath of thy Lord do touch them, they will then say, "Woe to us! we did wrong indeed!"

47. We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least, and if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed,(2707) We will bring it (to account): and enough are We to take account.(2708)

2707 Not the smallest action, word, thought, motive, or predilection but must come into the account of Allah. *Cf.* Browning (in *Rabbi Ben Ezra):* "But all, the world's coarse thumb and finger failed to plumb, So passed in making up the main account; All instincts immature, All purposes unsure, That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's account; Thoughts hardly to be packed Into a narrow act, Fancies that broke through language and escaped; All I could never be, All, men ignored in me, This, I was worth to God, Whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

2708 The literalism of Sale has here excelled itself: he translates, "and there will be sufficient accountants with us"! What is meant is that when Allah takes account, His accounting will be perfect: there will be no flaw in it, as there may be in earthly accountants, who require other people's help in some matters of account which they do not understand for want of knowledge of that particular department they are dealing with. Allah's knowledge is perfect, and therefore his justice will be perfect also; for He will not fail to take into account all the most intangible diings that determine conduct and character. See last note. There is no contradiction between this and 18:104-105, where it is said that men of vain words, *i.e.,* shallow hypocritical deeds, will have no weight attached to their deeds. In fact the two correspond.

48. In the past We granted to Moses and Aaron the criterion (for judgment),(2709) and a Light and a Message for those who would do right,-

2709 *Cf.* 2:53 and n. 68, where the meaning of *Furqan* is discussed. Here three things are mentioned as given to Moses and Aaron: (1) The Criterion for judgement; this might well be the wonderful Proofs they saw of Allah's goodness and glory from which they could have no doubt as to Allah's will and conmand; (2) the Light; this was the inner enlightenment of their soul, such as comes from inspiration; and (3) the Message, the book, the original book of Moses, which Aaron as his lieutenant would also use as a guide for his people.

49. Those who fear their Lord in their most secret thoughts, and who hold the Hour (of Judgment) in awe.(2710)

2710 Note the three kinds of fear mentioned in 21:48-49. *Taqwa* is the fear of running counter to the will of Allah; it is akin to the love of Him; for we fear to offend those we love; it results in right conduct, and those who entertain it are "those who would do right". Then there is *Khashyah,* the fear of Allah, lest the person who entertains it may be found, in his inmost thoughts, to be short of the standard which Allah wished for him; this is also righteous but in a less high degree than *Taqwa* which is akin to love. And thirdly, there is the fear of consequences on the Day of Judgement *(ishfaq);* this also may lead to righteousness, but is on a still lower plane. Perhaps the three correspond to the Criterion, the Light, and the Message (or Warning) of the last verse.

50. And this is a blessed Message which We have sent down: will ye then reject it?(2711)

2711 Here is a Prophet and a Book, greater than Moses and his Book. Are you going to reject him and it? (R).

51. We bestowed aforetime on Abraham his rectitude(2712) of conduct, and well were We acquainted with him.(2713)

2712 *Rushd:* right conduct, corresponding in action to the quality expressed in the epithet Hanif (sound or true in Faith) applied to Abraham in 2:135 and elsewhere.

2713 Hence Abraham's title "Friend of Allah" *(Khalil Allah):* 4:125.

52. Behold! he said to his father and his people,(2714) "What are these images, to which ye are (so assiduously) devoted?"

2714 Reference is made to Abraham in many places. In 19:42-49 it was with reference to his relations to his father: the problem was how a righteous man should deal with his father, when his duty to his father conflicts with his duty to Allah. Here the problem is: how a righteous man should deal with evil and overcome it; how he should fight against evil, and if he is subjected to the fire of persecution, how his firmness draws Allah's Mercy, and the very trouble he is placed in becomes his comfort and joy.

53. They said, "We found our fathers worshipping them."

54. He said, "Indeed ye have been in manifest error - ye and your fathers."

55. They said, "Have you brought us the Truth, or are you one of those who jest?"(2715)

2715 Abraham looked at life with a serious eye, and his people took it light-heartedly. He was devoted to Truth, and they cared more for ancestral custom. In the conflict, he seemed to be in their power. But he was fearless, and he triumphed by Allah's Grace.

56. He said, "Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He Who created them (from nothing):(2716) and I am a witness to this (Truth).

2716 For the various words for "creation" see n. 120 to 2:117, where *f atara* is explained and differentiated from other words of similar meaning.

57. "And by Allah, I have a plan for your idols - after ye go away and turn your backs"..(2717)

2717 He wants to convince them of the powerlessness of their idols. But he does not do it underhandedly. He tells them that he is going to do something when once they are gone and their backs are turned to the idols—as much as to say that the idols are dependent on their care and attention. Apparently the people are amused and want to see what he does. So they leave him to his own devices.

58. So he broke them to pieces, (all) but the biggest of them, that they might turn (and address themselves) to it.(2718)

2718 He was enacting a scene, to make the people ashamed of worshipping senseless sticks and stones. He left the biggest idol untouched and broke the others to pieces, as if a fight had taken place between the idols, and the biggest had smashed the others. Would they turn to the surviving idol and ask him how it all happened?

59. They said, "Who has done this to our gods? He must indeed be some man of impiety!"

60. They said, "We heard a youth talk of them:(2719) He is called Abraham."

2719 Different groups of people are speaking. Those who were not present at Abraham's speech in verse 57 ask, "who has done this?" Those who were, at once name him, whereupon a formal council of the people was held, and Abraham was arraigned.

61. They said, "Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness."

62. They said, "Art thou the one that did this with our gods, O Abraham?"(2720)

2720 They asked him the formal question. There was no mystery about it. He had already openly threatened to do something to the idols, and people who had heard his threats were there. He now continues his ironic taunt to the idol-worshippers. 'You ask me! Why don't you ask the idols? Doesn't it look as if this big fellow has smashed the smaller ones in a quarrel?' If they do not ask the idols, they confess that the idols have not intelligence enough to answer! This argument is developed in verses 64-67. Note that while the false worshipper laughed at his earnestness, he pays them back with a grim practical joke, which at the same time advances the cause of Truth.

63. He said: "Nay, this was done by - this is their biggest one! ask them, if they can speak intelligently!"

64. So they turned to themselves and said, "Surely ye are the ones in the wrong!"(2721)

2721 Abraham's biting irony cut them to the quick. What could they say? They turned to each other. Some among them thought he had the best of the argument. They were not keen on idolatry, and they told their fellows that it was useless arguing with Abraham. They all hung their heads in shame. But presently they thought they would face out Abraham, and take his words literally. They said, "You know quite well that idols do not speak!" This was precisely what Abraham wanted them to say, and he delivered his final blow! See n. 2723 below.

65. Then were they confounded(2722) with shame: (they said), "Thou knowest full well that these (idols) do not speak!"

2722 Literally, "they were turned down on their heads" which may suggest a metaphorical somersault, *i.e.,* they recovered from their dawning shame for idolatry and were prepared to argue it out with the youth Abraham. But I think there is a better authority for the interpretation I have adopted.

66. (Abraham) said, "Do ye then worship, besides Allah, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm?

67. "Fie upon you, and upon(2723) the things that ye worship besides Allah. Have ye no sense?"..

2723 As soon as they admitted in so many words that the idols could not speak, Abraham delivered his final attack: 'Then why do you worship useless impotent creatures?' After that, there remains nothing but the argument of violence, which they proceed to exercise, being the party in power. 'Burn him at the stake' is an easy cry! But it was not Abraham that suffered: it was his persecutors (21:70).

68. They said, "Burn him and protect your gods, If ye do (anything at all)!"

69. We said, "O Fire!(2724) be thou cool, and (a means of) safety for Abraham!"(2725)

2724 The nature of fire, by all the physical laws of matter, is to be hot. The supremacy of mind over matter is a phrase much used, but the supremacy of the spiritual over the material is not so commonly understood. And yet it is the greatest factor in the estimate of Reality. The material is ephemeral and relative. The spiritual is eternal and absolute. Through all the fire of persecution and hatred Abraham remained unhurt. The fire became cool, and a means of safety for Abraham.

2725 Can we form any idea of the place where he passed through the furnace, and the stage in his career at which this happened? He was born in Ur of the Chaldees, a place on the lower reaches of the Euphrates, not a hundred miles from the Persian Gulf . This was the cradle, or one of the cradles, of human civilisation. Astronomy was studied here in very ancient times, and the worship of the sun, moon, and stars was the prevailing form of religion. Abraham revolted against this quite early in life, and his argument is referred to in 6:74-82. They also had idols in their temples, probably idols representing heavenly bodies and celestial winged creatures. He was still a youth (21:60) when he broke the idols. This was stage No. 2. After this he was marked down as a rebel and persecuted. Perhaps some years passed before the incident of his being thrown into the Fire (21:68-69) took place, or the incident may be only allegorical. Traditionally the Fire incident is referred to a king called Nimrud, about whom see n. 1565 to 11:69. If Nimrud 's capital was in Assyria, near Nineveh (site near modern Mosul), we may suppose either that the king's rule extended over the whole of Mesopotamia, or that Abraham wandered north through Babylonia to Assyria . Various stratagems were devised to get rid of him (21:70), but he was saved by the mercy of Allah. The final break came when he was probably a man of mature age and could speak to his father with some authority. This incident is referred to in 19:41-48. He now left his ancestral lands, and avoiding the Syrian desert, came to the fertile lands of Aram or Syria, and so south to Canaan, when the incident of 11:69-76 and the adventures of his nephew Lut took place. It is some years after this that we may suppose he built the Ka'bah with Isma'il (2:124-129), and his prayer in 14:35-41 may be referred to the same time. His visit to Egypt (Gen. 12:10) is not referred to in the Qur'an.

70. Then they sought a stratagem against him: but We made them the ones that lost most!(2726)

2726 As they could not get rid of him by open punishment, they tried secret plans, but were foiled throughout. It was not he that lost, but they. On the contrary, he left them and prospered and became the progenitor of great peoples *(Cf.* 19:49).

71. But We delivered him and (his nephew) Lut (and directed them) to the land(2727) which We have blessed for the nations.

2727 The land of Aram or Syria , which in its widest connotation includes Canaan or Palestine , is a well-watered fertile land, with a Mediterranean sea-coast, on which the famous commercial cities of Tyre and Sidon were situated. Its population is very mixed, as it has been a bone of contention between all the great kingdoms and empires of Western Asia and Egypt , and European interest in it dates from the most ancient times. (R).

72. And We bestowed on him Isaac and, as an additional gift,(2728) (a grandson), Jacob, and We made righteous men of every one (of them).

2728 *Nafilah* has many meanings: (1) booty; (2) extra work or prayer; (3) extra or additional gift; (4) grandson. The two last implications are implied here. Not only was Abraham given a son in his old age; he was given not only Isaac *(Cf.* 19:49), but several sons, the chief being Isma'i1 and Isaac, who both joined in burying him (Gen. 25:9); and he also saw grandsons. Isma'i1 is specially mentioned later (21:85) apart from Isaac's line, on account of his special importance for Islam.

73. And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practise regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only).(2729)

2729 The spiritual lesson from this passage may be recapitulated. The righteous man makes no compromise with evil. If the votaries of evil laugh at him he pays them in their own coin, but he stands firmly by his principles. His firmness causes some confusion among the followers of evil, and he openly declares the faith that is in him. They try, openly and secretly, to injure or kill him, but Allah protects him, while evil perished from its own excesses.

74. And to Lut, too, We gave Judgment and Knowledge, and We saved him from the town which practised abominations: truly they were a people given to Evil, a rebellious people.(2730)

2730 Lot 's people were given to unspeakable abominations. His mission was to preach to them. He withstood Evil, but they rejected him. They were punished, but he and his followers were saved. See 15:61-74, 11:77-82, and 7:80-84.

75. And We admitted him to Our Mercy: for he was one of the Righteous.

76. (Remember) Noah, when he cried (to Us) aforetime:(2730-A) We listened to his (prayer) and delivered him and his family from great distress.(2731)

2730-A The date of Noah was many centuries before that of Abraham. (R).

2731 The contemporaries of Noah were given to Unbelief, oppression of the poor, and vain disputations. He carried Allah's Message to them, and standing fast in faith, built the Ark , in which he was saved with his followers from the Flood, while the wicked were drowned. See 11:25-48.

77. We helped him against people who rejected Our Signs: truly they were a people given to Evil: so We drowned them (in the Flood) all together.

78. And remember David and Solomon, when they gave judgment in the matter of the field into which the sheep of certain people had strayed by night: We did witness their judgment.

79. To Solomon We inspired(2732) the (right) understanding of the matter: to each (of them) We gave Judgment and Knowledge; it was Our power that made the hills and the birds celebrate Our praises(2733) with David: it was We Who did (all these things).

2732 The sheep, on account of the negligence of the shepherd, got into a cultivated field (or vineyard) by night and ate up the young plants or their tender shoots, causing damage, to the extent of perhaps a whole year's crop. David was king, and in his seat of judgement he considered the matter so serious that he awarded the owner of the field the sheep themselves in compensation for his damage. The Roman Law of the Twelve Tables might have approved this decision, and on the same principle was built up the Deodand doctrine of English Law, now obsolete. His son Solomon, a mere boy of eleven, thought of a better decision, where the penalty would better fit the offence. The loss was the loss of the fruits or produce of the field or vineyard: the *corpus* of the property was not lost. Solomon's suggestion was that the owner of the field or vineyard should not take the sheep altogether but only detain them long enough to recoup his actual damage, from the milk, wool, and possibly young of the sheep, and then return the sheep to the shepherd. David's merit was that he accepted the suggestion, even though it came from a little boy: Solomon's merit was that he distinguished between the *corpus* and income, and though a boy, was not ashamed to put his case before his father. But in either case it was Allah Who inspired the true realisation of justice. He was present and witnessed the affair, as He is present everywhere.

2733 Whatever is in the heavens and the earth celebrates the praises of Allah: 17:44; 57:1; 16:48-50, and 22:18. Even the "thunder repeateth His praises"; 13:13. All nature ever sings the praises of Allah. David sang in his Psalms, 148:7-10: "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye...mountains and all hills...creeping things and flying fowl!" All nature sings to Allah's glory, in unison with David, and angels, and men of God. *Cf.* 34:10 and 38:18-19 (R).

80. It was We Who taught(2734) him the making of coats of mail for your benefit, to guard you from each other´s violence: will ye then be grateful?(2735)

2734 The making of coats of mails is attributed to David. It is defensive armour, and therefore its discovery and supply is associated with deeds of righteousness in 34:10-11, in contrast with the deadly weapons which man invents for offensive purposes. Indeed, all fighting, unless in defence of righteousness is mere "violence."

2735 David's good work then was: (1) he was open to learn wisdom wherever it came from; (2) he sang the praises of Allah, in unison with all nature; (3) he made defensive armour. But all these things he did, because of the faculties which Allah had given him, and we must be grateful for this and for all things to Allah.

81. (It was Our power that made) the violent (unruly) wind flow (tamely) for Solomon,(2736) to his order, to the land(2737) which We had blessed: for We do know all things.

2736 *Cf.* 34:12, and 38:36-38. This has been interpreted to mean that Solomon had miraculous power over the winds, and could make them obey his order. Rationalists say that he had naval power on the Mediterranean, and through the Gulf of 'Aqaba on the Red Sea , and that he therefore figuratively commanded the winds, and we may say the same of airmen at the present day. In any case the power behind was, and is, from Allah, Who has granted man intelligence and the faculties by which he can tame the more unruly forces of nature.

2737 Evidently Palestine , in which was Solomon's capital, though his influence extended far north in Syria , and perhaps far south in Arabia and Ethiopia . In the Roman ruins of Baalbek , fifty miles north of Damascus , is still shown a quarry of huge stones supposed to have been cut for Solomon. I have seen them with my own eyes. This local tradition is interesting, even if invented.

82. And of the evil ones, were some who dived for him, and did other work(2738) besides; and it was We Who guarded them.

2738 As in n. 2736, the literalists and the rationalists take different views. The former say that Solomon had power over supernatural beings of evil, whom he compelled to dive for pearls and do other hard tasks. Rationalists refer this to hostile unruly races whom he subjected to his sway. It was Allah's power ultimately, Who granted him wisdom. Solomon tamed evil with Wisdom.

83. And (remember) Job, when He cried to his Lord, "Truly distress has seized me.(2739) But Thou art the Most Merciful of those that are merciful."

2739 Job *(Ayub)* was a prosperous man, with faith in Allah, living somewhere in the northeast corner of Arabia . He suffers from a number of calamities; his cattle are destroyed, his servants slain by the sword, and his family crushed under his

roof. But he holds fast to his faith in Allah. As a further calamity he is covered with loathsome sores from head to foot. He loses his peace of mind, and he curses the day he was born. His false friends come and attribute his affliction to sin. These "Job's comforters" are no comforters at all, and he further loses his balance of mind, but Allah recalls to him all His mercies, and he resumes his humility and gives up self-justification. He is restored to prosperity, with twice as much as he had before; his brethren and friends come back to him; he had a new family of seven sons and three fair daughters. He lived to a good old age, and saw four generations of descendants. All this is recorded in the Book of Job in the Old Testament. Of all the Hebrew writings, the Hebrew of this Book comes nearest to Arabic. The account given in the Biblical sources and the image that it projects of Prophet Job is decidedly different from that found in the Qur'an and the Hadith, which present him as a prophet and a brilliant example of dignified patience becoming of a great Prophet of Allah ever trustful in Him and His promises. Nothing could be further from the truth than saying that he lost his peace of mind or resorted to curses during the period of his trial. (R).

84. So We listened to him: We removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his people to him, and doubled their number,- as a Grace from Ourselves, and a thing for commemoration, for all who serve Us.(2740)

2740 Job is the pattern of humility, patience, and faith in Allah. It. was with these weapons that he fought and conquered evil.

85. And (remember) Isma´il,(2741) Idris,(2742) and Dhu al Kifl,(2743) all (men) of constancy and patience;

2741 Isma'il is mentioned specially, apart from the line which descended through Isaac (21:72), as he was the founder of a separate and greater Ummah. His sufferings began in infancy, (see n. 160 to 2:158); but his steady constancy and submission to the will of Allah were specially shown when he earned the title of "Sacrifice to Allah", (see n. 2506 to 19:54). That was the particular quality of his constancy and patience.

2742 For Idris see n. 2508 to 19:56. He was in a high station in life, but that did not spoil him. He was sincere and true, and that was the particular quality of his constancy and patience.

2743 *Dhu al Kifl would* literally mean "possessor of, or giving, a double requital or portion"; or else, "one who used a cloak of double thickness," that being one of the meanings of *Kifl.* The Commentators differ in opinion as to who is meant, why the title is applied to him, and the point of his being grouped with Isma'il and Idris for constancy and patience. I think the best suggestion is that afforded by Karsten Niebuhr in his *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien,* Copenhagen , 1778, 2:264-266, as quoted in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam under* "Dhu al Kifl". He visited Meshed 'Ah in Iraq , and also the little town called Kefil, midway between Najaf and Hillah (Babylon). Kefil, he says, is the Arabic form of Ezekiel. The shrine of Ezekiel was there, and the Jews came to it on a pilgrimage.

If we accept "Dhu al Kifl" to be not an epithet, but an Arabicised form of "Ezekiel", it fits the context. Ezekiel was a prophet in Israel who was carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar after his second attack on Jerusalem (about B.C. 599). His Book is included in the English Bible (Old Testament). He was chained and bound, and put into prison, and for a time he was dumb, (Ezekiel, 3:25-26). He bore it all with patience and constancy, and continued to reprove boldly the evils in Israel . In a burning passage he denounces false leaders in words which are eternally true: "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, you kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken . . .", etc. (Ezekiel, 34:2-4).

Dhu al Kifl is again mentioned in 38:48 along with Isma'i1 and Elisha.

86. We admitted them to Our mercy: for they were of the righteous ones.

87. And remember Dhu al Nun,(2744) when he departed in wrath: He imagined that We had no power over him! But he cried through the deptHs of darkness, "There is no god but thou: glory to thee: I was indeed wrong!"

2744 *Dhu al Nun,* "the man of the Fish or the Whale", is the title of Jonah (Yunus), because he was swallowed by a large Fish or Whale. He was the prophet raised to warn the Assyrian capital Nineveh . For Nineveh see n. 1478 to 10:98. His story is told in 37:139-149. When his first warning was unheeded by the people, he denounced Allah's wrath on them. But they repented and Allah forgave them for the time being. Jonah, meanwhile, departed in wrath, discouraged at the apparent failure of his mission. He should have remained in the most discouraging circumstances, and relied on the power of Allah; for Allah had power both over Nineveh and over the Messenger He had sent to Nineveh . He went away to the sea and took a ship, but apparently the sailors threw him out as a man of bad omen in a storm. He was swallowed by a big Fish (or Whale), but in the depth of the darkness, he cried to Allah and confessed his weakness. The "darkness" may be interpreted both physically and spiritually; physically, as the darkness of the night and the storm and the Fish's body; spiritually as the darkness in his soul, his extreme distress in the situation which he had brought on himself. Allah Most Gracious forgave him. He was cast out ashore; he was given the shelter of a plant in his state of physical and mental lassitude. He was refreshed and strengthened, and the work of his mission prospered. Thus he overcame all his disappointment by repentance and Faith, and Allah accepted him.

88. So We listened to him: and delivered him from distress: and thus do We deliver those who have faith.

89. And (remember) Zakariya,(2745) when he cried to his Lord: "O my Lord! leave me not without offspring, though thou art the best of inheritors."(2746)

2745 See 19:2-15, and 3:38-41. Zakariya was a priest; both he and his wife were devout and punctilious in their duties. They were old, and they had no son. He was troubled in mind, not so much by the vulgar desire to have a son to carry on his line, but because he felt that his people were not unselfishly devout, and there would be no sincere work for Allah unless he could train some one himself. He was given a son Yahya (John the Baptist), who added to the devout reputation of the family, for he is called "noble, chaste, and a prophet," (3:39). All three, father, mother, and son, were made worthy of each other, and they repelled evil by their devout emulation in virtue,

2746 It is not that I crave a personal heir to myself; all things go back to Thee, and Thou art the best of inheritors: but I see no one around me sincere enough to carry on my work for Thee; wilt Thou give me one whom 1 can train?'

90. So We listened to him: and We granted him Yahya: We cured his wife´s(2747) (Barrenness) for him. These (three) were ever quick in emulation in good works; they used to call on Us with love and reverence, and humble themselves before Us.

2747 *Aslaha* = to improve, to mend, to reform, to make better. Here, with reference to Zakanya's wife the signification is twofold: (1) that her barrenness would be removed, so that she could become a mother; and (2) her spiritual dignity should be raised in becoming the mother of John the Baptist; and by implication his also, in becoming the father of John.

91. And (remember) her who(2748) guarded her chastity: We breathed into her of Our spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all peoples.

2748 Mary, the mother of Jesus, chastity was her special virtue: with a son of virgin birth, she and Jesus became a miracle to all nations. That was the virtue with which they (both Mary and Jesus) resisted evil.

92. Verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood,(2749) and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me (and no other).

2749 *Ummah:* this is best translated by Brotherhood here. "Community", "race", and "nation", and "people" are words which import other ideas and do not quite correspond to "Ummah". "Religion" and "Way of Life" are derived meanings, which could be used in other passages, but arc less appropriate here. Our attention has been drawn to people of veiy different temperaments and virtues, widely different in time, race, language, surroundings, history, and work to be performed, but forming the closest brotherhood as being men and women united in the highest service of Allah. They pre-figure the final and perfected Brotherhood of Islam.

93. But (later generations) cut off(2750) their affair (of unity), one from another: (yet) will they all return to Us.

2750 Allah's Message was and ever is one; and His Messengers treated it as one. It is people of narrower views who come later and trade on the earlier names, that break up the Message and the Brotherhood into jarring camps and sects *(Cf.* 23:52-53).

94. Whoever works any act of righteousness and has faith,- His endeavour will not be rejected: We shall record it in his favour.(2751)

2751 Allah gives credit for every act of righteousness, however small: when combined with sincere Faith in Allah, it becomes the stepping stone to higher and higher things. It is never lost.

95. But there is a ban on any population which We have destroyed: that they(2752) shall not return,

2752 But when wickedness comes to such a pass that the Wrath of Allah descends, as it did on Sodom , the case becomes hopeless. The righteous were warned and delivered before the Wrath descended. But those destroyed will not get another chance, as they flouted all previous chances. They will only be raised at the approach of the Day of Judgement.

96. Until the Gog and Magog (people)(2753) are let through (their barrier), and they swiftly swarm from every hill.

2753 For Gog and Magog see n. 2439 to 18:94. Their geographical position was discussed in Appendix VI. Here I do not think we are concerned with their geographical position. The name stands for wild and lawless tribes who will break their barriers and swarm through the earth. This will be one of the prognostications of the approaching Judgement.

97. Then will the true promise draw nigh (of fulfilment): then behold! the eyes of the Unbelievers will(2754) fixedly stare in horror: "Ah! Woe to us! we were indeed heedless of this; nay, we truly did wrong!"

2754 *Cf.* 14:42.

98. Verily ye, (unbelievers), and the (false) gods that ye worship besides Allah, are (but) fuel for Hell! to it will ye (surely) come!

99. If these had been gods, they would not have got there!(2755) but each one will abide therein.

2755 The ultimate proof of Truth and Falsehood will be that Truth will endure and come to its own, while Falsehood will be destroyed. And so the men who worshipped Truth will come to their own, while those who worshipped Falsehood will be in a Fire of Punishment they could scarcely have imagined before. In that state there will be nothing but regrets and sighs and groans, and these evil sounds will drown everything else,

100. There, sobbing will be their lot, nor will they there hear (aught else).

101. Those for whom the good (record) from Us has gone before, will be removed far therefrom.(2756)

2756 In contrast to the misery of those who rejected Truth and Right, will be the happiness of those who accepted it. Their record does not lag behind: in fact it goes before. Our Deeds go before our journey in this life is completed. What then is Judgement? It is instantaneous: it will all be decided in the twinkling of an eye (16:77). The good will not hear the least sound of the groans of evil. Their true soul's desires will be fulfilled—not temporarily as in this world, but in a permanent form.

102. Not the slightest sound will they hear of Hell: what their souls desired, in that will they dwell.

103. The Great Terror will(2757) bring them no grief: but the angels will meet them (with mutual greetings): "This is your Day,- (the Day) that ye were promised."

2757 The Judgement and balancing of accounts will be a mighty Terror to the evil doers. But it will cause, to the righteous, not grief or anxiety, but hope and happiness, for now they will be in a congenial atmosphere, and will see the fulfilment of their ideals in the meeting and greeting of the angels, preparatory to their enjoyment of the supreme Bliss—seeing the Face of Allah.

104. The Day that We roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books (completed),- even as We produced the first creation, so shall We produce(2758) a new one: a promise We have undertaken: truly shall We fulfil it.

2758 The world—the universe—as we know it, will be folded up like a scroll of parchment, for it will have done its work. If Allah created all this world out of nothing, He can create an entirely new heaven and a new earth, on a plane of which we can form no conception in our present life. And He will do so, for that is His promise. Some Commentators understand *Sijill to* be the name of the Recording Angel who closes the Book of a man's Deeds after the man's death *(Cf.* 39:67).

105. Before this We wrote in the Psalms,(2759) after the Message (given to Moses):(2760) My servants the righteous, shall inherit the earth."

2759 *Zabur*. the Book of the Psalms of David. The name of David is expressly mentioned in connection with the *Zabum in* 4:163 and 17:55, although there the indefinite article is applied to the word as meaning a Book of Scripture. See Psalms 25:13, "his seed shall inherit the earth": 37:11, "the meek shall inherit the earth" (quoted by Jesus in Matt. 5:5); and 37:29, "the righteous shall inherit the land." (R).

2760 The same promise occurs in the Pentateuch, Exod. 32:13, "they shall inherit it (the land) forever."

106. Verily in this (Qur´an) is a Message for people who would (truly) worship Allah.(2761)

2761 The culmination of Allah's Revelation is in the Qur'an, which confirms previous scriptures, corrects the errors which men introduced into them, and explains many points in detail for all who seek right worship and service to Allah—whether they inherit the previous Books ("People of the Book") or not. It is a universal Message.

107. We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures.(2762)

2762 There is no question now of race or nation, of a "chosen people" or the "seed of Abraham"; or the "seed of David"; or of Hindu *Arya-varta;* of Jew or Gentile, Arab or 'Ajam(Persian), Turk or *Tajik,* European or Asiatic, White or Coloured; Aryan, Semitic, Mongolian, or African; or American, Australian, or Polynesian. To all men and creatures other than men who have any spiritual responsibility, the principles universally apply.

108. Say: "What has come to me by inspiration is that your Allah is One Allah. will ye therefore bow to His Will (in Islam)?"(2763)

2763 'Not my God only, but also *your God:* for there is but One God, the Universal Lord, Who made and loves and cherishes all.'

109. But if they turn back, Say: "I have proclaimed the Message to you all alike and in truth; but I know not whether that which ye are promised is near or far.(2764)

2764 'If you do not realise the significance of the Message, I at least have done my duty. I have given the Good News for the Righteous and the Warning for the Unjust, without favour or partiality, and without abating one jot of the truth, openly and squarely for all. Do not ask me when the Good News and the Warning will be fulfilled. That is for Allah to decide, not for me or for you to know.'

110. "It is He Who knows what is open in speech and what ye hide (in your hearts).(2765)

2765 The Messenger of Allah freely and impartially teaches all how to carry out Allah's Will and live a good life. If some of them are hypocrites and come into the Ummah (Brotherhood) from baser motives and not the pure motives of the love of Allah, their motives and conduct will be judged by Allah and not by men.

111. "I know not but that it may be a trial for you, and a grant of (worldly) livelihood (to you) for a time."(2766)

2766 In the same way if men who come into the Brotherhood from pure motives and yet feel aggrieved that those outside are better off from a worldly point of

view, they are wrong. It may be that the fleeting enjoyment of this world's goods is but a trial, and they should be grateful for being saved from temptation.

112. Say:(2767) "O my Lord! judge Thou in truth!"(2768) "Our Lord Most Gracious is the One Whose assistance should be sought against the blasphemies ye utter!"(2769)

2767 See above, n. 2666 to 21:4. The better reading is "Say" in the imperative, rather than "He (the Prophet) said (or says)" in the indicative mood. Note that, on that construction, there are three distinct things which the Prophet is asked to say: *viz.:* (1) the statement in verses 109-111, addressed to those who turn away from the Message; (2) the prayer addressed to Allah in the first part of verse 112; and (3) the advice given indirectly to the Believers, in the second part of verse 112.1 have marked these divisions by means of inverted commas.

2768 That is, Allah's judgement as between the Teacher and those who refused the Message, or between the righteous and those who taunt them for their poverty, will be the true one, and both the Teacher and the Ummah must leave the judgement to Allah.

2769 Blasphemy is a dreadful sin. We must guard ourselves from it. But as regards others, if we cannot prevent it, we must pray to Allah for assistance and not rely upon carnal weapons.



22. Al Hajj (The Pilgrimage)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. O mankind! fear your Lord! for the convulsion of the Hour (of Judgment) will be a thing terrible!(2770)

2770 As an introduction to the spiritual meaning of various symbolic acts in this life, the serious issues involved are indicated by showing how terrible the consequences will be for those who disobey Allah's Will. The terror will only be for those who rebel and disobey: the righteous will not suffer from it, but on the contrary will be greeted by angels with joy (21:103).

2. The Day ye shall see it, every mother giving suck shall forget her suckling- babe, and every pregnant female shall drop her load (unformed): thou shalt see mankind as in a drunken riot,(2771) yet not drunk: but dreadful will be the Wrath of Allah.

2771 Three metaphors are used for the extreme terror which the Awful Day will inspire. (1) No mother abandons the baby at her breast in the greatest danger; yet that will happen in this Dreadful Hour. (2) An expectant mother carries the young life within her with great pride and hope: "hope" is the actual word used in Urdu for this physical state; yet the terror will overpower the hope at this "Hour", and nature's working will be reversed. (3) Men ordinarily retain their self-possession except under intoxicants; here, without intoxication, they will be driven to frenzy with terror.

3. And yet among men there are such as dispute about Allah, without knowledge, and follow every evil one obstinate in rebellion!

4. About the (Evil One) it is decreed that whoever turns to him for friendship, him will he lead astray, and he will guide him to the Penalty of the Fire.(2772)

2772 Even after the warnings, there are men who are such fools as to turn away from Allah who created them and cherishes them with His love and care; they become outlaws in His Kingdom, making friends with Evil, which is a rebel in Allah's Kingdom.

5. O mankind! if ye have a doubt about the Resurrection,(2773) (consider) that We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of a leech-like clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed(2774) and partly unformed, in order that We may manifest (our power) to you; and We cause whom We will(2775) to rest in the wombs for an appointed term, then do We bring you out as babes, then (foster you) that ye may reach your age of full strength; and some of you are called to die, and some are sent back to the feeblest old age, so that they know nothing after having known (much).(2776) And (further), thou seest the earth barren and lifeless, but when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life), it swells, and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs).(2777)

2773 If they really have doubts in their minds about the life after death, they have only to turn their attention, either to their own nature, or to the nature around. How wonderful is their own physical growth, from lifeless matter, to seed, fertilised ovum, fetus, child, youth, age, and death! How can they doubt that the Author of all these wonderful stages in their life here can also give them another kind of life after the end of this life? Or, if they look at external nature, they see the earth dead and barren, and Allah's fertilising showers bring it to life, growth, and beauty in various forms. The Creator of this great pageant of Beauty can surely create yet another and a newer world.

2774 The stages of a man's physical growth from nothing till he completes the cycle of this life are described in words whose accuracy, beauty, and comprehensiveness can only be fully understood by biologists. Parallel to the physical growth, may be understood man's inner growth, also by stages and by Allah's creative artistry.

2775 That is, a male or a female child, a fair or an ugly child, a good or a rebellious child, etc., involving countless mysteries of genetics and heredity.

2776 *Cf.* 16:70. In that passage the mystery of our life was used to illustrate Allah's abundant mercies and favours to us. Here it is used to illustrate Allah's power in giving us a future Life of even greater promise (see also 40:67).

2777 A beautiful nature passage so pregnant in meaning that the earnest student wonders what magic and truth have been conveyed in so few words. M. P.'s Egyptian colleague, Prof. Ghamrawi (see M. P.'s note on this passage) was but expressing the feelings of every careful student of the Qur'an. The "subtlety and wealth of meaning" are indeed marvellous.

6. This is so, because Allah is the Reality: it is He Who gives life to the dead, and it is He Who has power over all things.(2778)

2778 All these beautiful and well-articulated pageants of life and nature point to the Reality behind them, *i.e.,* Allah. They will perish, but He is eternal. They are but shadows; the substance (if such a word may be used) is in Him. They are shifting and illusory, in the sense that they have neither permanency nor independent existence. But they have a sort of secondary reality in the sense in which a shadow is a real reflection from substance. No Power or Existence has any meaning except as a reflection of Allah's ineffable Glory.

7. And verily the Hour will come: there can be no doubt about it, or about (the fact) that Allah will raise up all who are in the graves.

8. Yet there is among men such a one as disputes about Allah, without Knowledge, without Guidance, and without a Book of Enlightenment,-(2779)

2779 For "Book of Enlightenment" see 3:184 and n. 490. I understand "knowledge" to mean here their human knowledge or intelligence, "guidance" to mean divine guidance, such as comes from Allah or prophets of Allah or a revelation from Allah, and the "Book of Enlightenment" to mean the fundamental guide to good conduct, the clear rules laid down in all Dispensations to help men lead good lives. The "Book of Enlightenment" may mean a revealed Book in which case "Guidance" would refer to divine guidance through a prophet of Allah. (R).

9. (Disdainfully) bending his side, in order to lead (men) astray from the Path of Allah. for him there is disgrace(2780) in this life, and on the Day of Judgment We shall make him taste the Penalty of burning (Fire).

2780 Some Commentators think this refers to Abu J ahl, but the words are perfectly general, and this type of man is common in all ages. The same may be said about verse 3 above: Commentators give the immediate reference to one al Nadr ibn al Harith.

10. (It will be said): "This is because of the deeds which thy hands sent forth, for verily Allah is not unjust to His servants.(2781)

2781 'What you suffer is the consequence of your own sinful deeds; Allah is just; He is not unjust in the least to any of His creatures'. (R).

11. There are among men some who serve Allah, as it were, on the verge:(2782) if good befalls them, they are, therewith, well content; but if a trial comes to them, they turn on their faces: they lose both this world and the Hereafter: that is loss for all to see!

2782 They are men whose minds are not firm: they will have faith, if all goes well with them, but as soon as they are tried, they are found wanting. They differ from hypocrites. It is not fraud or double dealing that is their sin: it is a weak mind, petty standards of judging right by success, a selfishness that gives nothing but asks for all, a narrow-mindedness that does not go beyond petty mundane calculations-a "nicely calculated less or more" of the good things of this world. They fail in both worlds and their failure in this world is patent for every on-looker.

12. They call on such deities,(2783) besides Allah, as can neither hurt nor profit them: that is straying far indeed (from the Way)!

2783 To such minds religion does not mean high endeavour, self-sacrifice for noble ends, the recognition of Allah's infinite world, but just a small concession to formalism, perhaps a present to an idol (literal or figurative), perhaps attendance at worship if it can be done without trouble! It is false gods they worship, and the more they worship, the more they stray.

13. (Perhaps) they call on one whose harm is nearer(2784) than his profit: evil, indeed, is the patron, and evil the companion (for help)!

2784 Such false worship is not always neutral, bringing neither harm nor good. Perhaps the harm comes first, and there is no help from Allah. Such minds are themselves demoralised, and render themselves unfit for help!

14. Verily Allah will admit those who believe and work righteous deeds, to Gardens, beneath which rivers flow: for Allah carries out all that He plans.(2785)

2785 Allah is both true to His promise, and He has power to give full effect to His Will and Plan.

15. If any think that Allah will not help him (His Messenger. in this world and the Hereafter, let him stretch out a rope to the ceiling and cut (himself)(2786) off: then let him see whether his plan will remove that which enrages (him)!

2786 There is some difference of opinion as to the interpretation of this verse. Most Commentators are agreed that the pronoun "him" in the second line ("will not help him") refers to the Prophet, and that the "any" in the first line refers to his enemies, who wished to see him destroyed and removed from the scene of his labours, Ibn 'Abbas, whom I have followed here, and whom a great number of Commentators follow, construes the later clauses in the sense given in the text. Freely paraphrased, it means: if the enemies of Allah's Messenger are enraged at his successes, let them fix a rope to their ceiling and hang themselves. *Sama 1* is thus rendered by the word "ceiling". If *Sama"* is rendered by the word "heaven" (the usual meaning), the paraphrase would be: if the enemies of Allah's Messenger are enraged at the help he gets from heavens, let them stretch a rope to heaven and see if they can cut off the help that way!-in other words, they are fools if they think they can intercept Allah's help by their petty devices!

16. Thus have We sent down(2787) Clear Sings; and verily Allah doth guide whom He will!

2787 Instead of plotting against Allah's Messenger, the Unbelievers should observe the Clear Signs which he has brought and obey and follow the Guidance which comes from Allah according to the Laws which He has fixed by His Holy Will and Plan.

17. Those who believe (in the Qur´an), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabians,(2788) Christians, Magians,(2789) and Polytheists,- Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment: for Allah is witness of all things.

2788 For Sabians, see n. 76 to 2:62. They are also referred to in 5:69. In both those passages, the Muslims are mentioned with the Jews, Christians, and Sabians, as receiving Allah's protection and mercy. Here, besides the four religions, there is further mention of Magians and Polytheists: it is not said that they would receive Allah's Mercy, but only that Allah will judge between the various forms of faith. (R).

2789 This is the only place where the Magians *(Majus)* are mentioned in the Qur'an. Their cult is a very ancient one. They consider Fire as the purest and noblest element, and worship it as a fit emblem of Allah. Their location was the Persian and Median uplands and the Mesopotamian valleys, their religion was reformed by Zardusht (date uncertain, about B.C. 600?). Their scripture is the Zend-Avesta, the bible of the ParsTs. They were "the Wise men of the East" mentioned in the Gospels. (R).

18. Seest thou not that to Allah bow down in worship all things that are in the heavens and on earth,-(2790) the sun, the moon, the stars; the hills, the trees, the animals; and a great number among mankind? But a great number are (also) such as are fit for Punishment: and such as Allah shall disgrace,- None can raise to honour: for Allah carries out all that He wills.(2791)

2790 *Cf.* 21:79, and n. 2733. All created things, animate and inanimate, depend on Allah for their existence, and this dependence can be construed as their *Sajda* or bowing down in worship. Their very existence proclaims their dependence. How can they be objects of worship? For *haqqa* in this verse , *Cf.* 15:64, n. 1990.

2791 *Cf.* 22:16. There the argument was that those who work in harmony with Allah's Law and Will will get their reward, for Allah always carries out His Plan. Here is the parallel argument: those who defy Allah's Will must suffer pain and disgrace, for Allah is well able to carry out His Will {see also 38:14).

19. These two antagonists dispute(2792) with each other about their Lord: But those who deny (their Lord),- for them will be cut out a garment of Fire: over their heads will be poured out boiling water.

2792 *Two antagonists: i.e.,* parties of antagonists, *viz.,* Men of Faith, who confess their Lord and seek to carry out His Will, and Men who deny their Lord and defy His Will.

20. With it will be scalded what is within their bodies, as well as (their) skins.(2793)

2793 The punishment, expressed in physical terms, will be all-pervading, not merely superficial.

21. In addition there will be maces of iron (to punish) them.(2794)

2794 Read this with the next verse. There will be no escape from the final Punishment judged after the time of repentance is past *(Cf.* 32:20).

22. Every time they wish to get away therefrom, from anguish, they will be forced back therein, and (it will be said), "Taste ye the Penalty of Burning!"

23. Allah will admit those who believe and work righteous deeds, to Gardens beneath which(2795) rivers flow: they shall be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearls; and their garments there will be of silk.

2795 In 22:14 above, was described the meed of the Righteous as compared with the time-servers and those who worshipped false gods *(w.* 10-13): here we have the case of those who were persecuted, abused, prevented from entering the Ka'bah and deprived of all that makes life smooth, agreeable, and comfortable. For them the meed is described in metaphors that negative all these afflictions: costly adornments (as against being stripped of home and property), purity of speech (as against the abuse they received), the Path of the Lord of Praise (as against the fierce and malignant persecution to which they were subjected) (see also 18:31 and 35:33).

24. For they have been guided (in this life) to the purest of speeches; they have been guided to the Path of Him Who is Worthy of (all) Praise.

25. As to those who have rejected ((Allah)), and would keep back (men) from the Way of Allah, and from the Sacred Mosque, which We have made (open) to (all) men - equal is the dweller there and the visitor from the country - and any whose purpose therein is profanity or wrong-doing -(2796) them will We cause to taste of a most Grievous Penalty.

2796 All these were enormities of which the Pagan clique in power in Makkah were guilty before and during the Hijrah.

26. Behold! We gave the site,(2797) to Abraham, of the (Sacred) House, (saying): "Associate not anything (in worship) with Me; and sanctify My House for those who compass it round,(2798) or stand up, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer).

2797 The site of Makkah was granted to Abraham (and his son Isma'i 1) for a place of worship that was to be pure {without idols, the worship being paid to Allah, the One True God) and universal, without being reserved (like Solomon's Temple of later times) to any one People or Race. (R).

2798 *Cf.* 2:125. Note that here the word *qa'imin* (who stand up for prayer) occurs in place of *'akifin* (who use it as a retreat). In practice the meaning is the same. Those who go for a retreat to the Ka'bah stay there for the time being.

27. "And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men: they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways;(2799)

2799 When the Pilgrimage was proclaimed, people came to it from every quarter, near and far, on foot and mounted. The "lean camel" coming after a fatiguing journey through distant mountain roads typifies the difficulties of travel, which Pilgrims disregard on account of the temporal and spiritual benefits referred to in the next verse.

28. "That they may witness the benefits (provided) for them,(2800) and celebrate the name of Allah, through the Days(2801) appointed, over the cattle(2802) which He has provided for them (for sacrifice): then eat ye thereof and feed the distressed ones in want.

2800 There are benefits both for this our material life and for our spiritual life. Of the former kind are those associated with social intercourse which furthers trade and increases knowledge. Of the latter kind are the opportunities of realising some of our spiritual yearnings in sacred associations that go back to the most ancient times. Of both kinds may be considered the opportunities which the Pilgrimage provides for strengthening our international Brotherhood.

2801 The three special days of Hajj are the 8th, 9th, and 10th of the month of Dhu al Hijjah, and the two or three subsequent days of *Tashriqisee* the rites explained in n. 217 to 2:197. But we may ordinarily include the first ten days of Dhu al Hijjah in the term.

2802 The great day of commemorative Sacrifice ('Id al Adha) is the 10th of Dhu al Hijjah: the meat then killed is meant to be eaten for food and distributed to the poor and needy. (R).

29. "Then let them complete the rites prescribed(2803) for them, perform their vows,(2804) and (again) circumambulate the Ancient House."

2803 *Tafath- t he* superfluous growth on one's body, such as nails, hair, etc., which is not permitted to remove in *Ihram.* These may be removed on the 10th day, when the Hajj is completed: that is the rite of completion.

2804 The spirit of Pilgrimage is not completed by the performance of the outward rites. The Pilgrim should carry in mind some vow or spiritual service and endeavour to perform it. Then comes the final *Tawaf.*

30. Such (is the Pilgrimage): whoever honours the sacred rites of Allah, for him it is good in the Sight of his Lord. Lawful to you (for food in Pilgrimage) are cattle, except those mentioned to you(2805) (as exception): but shun the abomination of idols, and shun the word that is false,-

2805 The general food prohibitions will be found in 2:173, 5:4-5, and 6:121, 138-146. They are meant for health and cleanliness, but the worst abominations to shun are those of false worship and false speech. Here the question is about food during Pilgrimage. Lawful meat but not game is allowed.

31. Being true in faith to Allah, and never assigning partners to Him: if anyone assigns partners to Allah, is as if he had fallen from heaven and been snatched up by birds, or the wind had swooped (like a bird on its prey) and thrown him into a far- distant place.(2806)

2806 A parable full of meaning. The man who falls from the worship of the One True God. is like a man who falls from heaven. His being taken up with false objects of worship is like the falling man being picked up in the air by birds of prey. But the false objects of worship cannot hold him permanently in their grip. A fierce blast of wind-the Wrath of Allah-comes and snatches him away and throws him into a place far, far away from any place he could have imagined-into the hell of those who defied Allah. (R).

32. Such (is his state): and whoever holds in honour the Symbols of Allah,(2807) (in the sacrifice of animals), such (honour) should come truly from piety of heart.

2807 *Sha'a'ir,* symbols, signs, marks by which something is known to belong to some particular body of men, such as flags. In 2:158 the word was applied to Safa and Marwah: see n. 160 there. Here it seems to be applied to the rites of sacrifice. Such sacrifice is symbolic: it should betoken dedication and piety of heart. See below, 22:37.

33. In them(2808) ye have benefits for a term appointed: in the end their place of sacrifice is near(2809) the Ancient House.

2808 *In them:* in cattle, or animals offered for sacrifice. It is quite true that they are useful in many ways to man, *e.g.,* camels in desert countries are useful as mounts or for carrying burdens, or for giving milk, and so for horses and oxen; and camels and oxen are also good for meat, and camel's hair can be woven into cloth; goats and sheep also yield milk and meat, and hair or wool. But if they are used for sacrifice, they become symbols by which men show that they are willing to give up some of their own benefits for the sake of satisfying the needs of their poorer brethren.

2809 *Ila=* towards, near. The actual sacrifice is not performed in the Ka'bah, but at Mina, five or six miles off, where the Pilgrims encamp: see n. 217 to 2:197.

Thumma=then, finally, in the end; *i.e.,* after all the rites have been performed, Tawaf, Sara, and Marwah, and 'Arafat.

34. To every people did We appoint rites (of sacrifice), that they might celebrate the name of Allah over the sustenance He gave them from animals (fit for food).(2810) But your Allah is One Allah. submit then your wills to Him (in Islam): and give thou the good news(2811) to those who humble themselves,-

2810 This is the true end of sacrifice, not propitiation of higher powers, for Allah is One, and He does not delight in flesh or blood (22:37), but a symbol of thanksgiving to Allah by sharing meat with fellow-men. The solemn pronouncement of Allah's name over the sacrifice is an essential part of the rite.

2811 *The good news: i.e.,* the Message of Allah, that He will accept in us the sacrifice of self for the benefit of our fellow-men.

35. To those whose hearts when Allah is mentioned, are filled with fear, who show patient perseverance over their afflictions, keep up regular prayer, and spend (in charity) out of what We have bestowed upon them.(2812)

2812 Some qualities of Allah's devotees are mentioned here, in ascending order: (1) Humility before Allah makes them receptive, and prepares them to listen to Allah's Message; (2) fear of Allah, which is akin to love, touches their heart, and penetrates through their inmost being; (3) they are not afraid of anything in mortal life; they take their trials patiently, and they go on in a course of righteousness with constancy; (4) their prayer now is not a matter of form, but a real communion with Allah, with a sense of confidence such as a faithful servant feels in the presence of a kind and loving master; and (5) gratitude to Allah, as shown by practical acts of charity to all fellow-creatures.

36. The sacrificial camels we have made for you as among the symbols from Allah. in them is (much) good for you: then pronounce the name of Allah over them as they line up (for sacrifice):(2813) when they are down on their sides (after slaughter), eat ye thereof, and feed such as (beg not but) live in contentment,(2814) and such as beg with due humility: thus have We made animals subject to you, that ye may be grateful.

2813 See n. 2808 to 22:33 above. What was expressed in general terms is applied here more particularly to camels, the most precious and useful animals of Arabia , whose mode of slaughter for sacrifice is different from that of smaller animals: the special word for such sacrifice is *Nahr* (108:2).

2814 There are ethics in begging, as in charity. No approval is given to arrogant and insolent begging, though the relief of distress of all kinds, deserved and undeserved, is included in charity. But those who beg with humility and those who receive gifts with gratitude and contentment are both mentioned for special attention. Charity should not be given for show, or to get rid of importunate demands. It should find out real needs and meet them.

37. It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah. it is your piety that reaches Him: He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify Allah for His guidance to you:(2815) and proclaim the good news to all who do right.

2815 The essence of sacrifice has been explained in n. 2810. No one should suppose that meat or blood is acceptable to the One True God. It was a Pagan fancy that Allah could be appeased by blood sacrifice. But Allah does accept the offering of our hearts, and as a symbol of such offer, some visible institution is necessary. He has given us power over the brute creation, and permitted us to eat meat, but only if we pronounce His name at the solemn act of taking life, for without this solemn invocation, we are apt to forget the sacredness of life. By the invocation we are reminded that wanton cruelty is not in our thoughts, but only the need of food. Now if we further deny ourselves the greater part of the food (some theologians fix the proportion at three-quarters or two-thirds) for the sake of our poorer brethren in solemn assembly in the precincts of the Haram (sacred territory), our symbolic act finds practical expression in benevolence, and that is the virtue sought to be taught. We should be grateful to Allah for His guidance in this matter, in which many Peoples have gone wrong, and we should proclaim the true doctrine, so that virtue and charity may increase among men.

38. Verily Allah will defend (from ill) those who believe: verily, Allah loveth not any that is a traitor to faith, or show ingratitude.

39. To those against whom(2816) war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged;- and verily, Allah is most powerful for their aid;-

2816 Several translators have failed to notice that *yuqa taluna* is in the passive voice, "against whom war is made"-not "who take arms against the unbelievers" as Sale translates it. The clause "and verily... their aid" is parenthetical. Verse 40 connects on with "they are wronged". The wrong is indicated: 'driven by persecution from their home, for no other reason than that they worshipped the One True God 1 . This was the first occasion on which fighting-in self-defence-was permitted. This passage therefore undoubtedly dates from Madinah.

40. (They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right,- (for no cause) except that they say, "our Lord is Allah.. Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another,(2817) there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure. Allah will certainly aid those who aid his (cause);- for verily Allah is full of Strength, Exalted in Might,(2818) (able to enforce His Will).

2817 *Cf.* 2:251, where the expression is used in connection with David's fight against the Philistines. To allow a righteous people to fight against a ferocious and mischief-loving people was fully justified. But the justification was far greater here, when the little Muslim community was not only fighting for its own existence against the Makkan Quraysh, but for the very existence of the Faith in the One True God. They had as much right to be in Makkah and worship in the Ka'bah as the other Quraysh; yet they were exiled for their Faith. It affected not the faith of one particular people. The principle involved was that of all worship, Jewish or Christian as well as Muslim, and of all foundations built for pious uses.

2818 'Aziz means Exalted in power, rank, dignity; Incomparable; Full of might and majesty; Able to enforce His Will. The last signification is the one that predominates here *(Cf.* 22:74).

41. (They are) those who, if We establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity, enjoin the right and forbid wrong:(2819) with Allah rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs.

2819 'Enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong" is an essential duty of the Muslim Ummah and one of the main purposes for which it has been raised. (See 3:104, 110; 9:71, 111-112). (Eds.).

42. If they treat thy (mission) as false, so did the peoples before them (with their prophets),-(2820) the People of Noah, and ´Ad and Thamud;

2820 It is nothing new if the Prophet of Allah is accused of imposture. This was done in all ages: *e.g.,* Noah (7:64); Hud the prophet of the 'Ad people (7:66); Salih prophet of Thamud (7:76); Abraham (21:55); Lut (7:82); Shu'aib the prophet of the Madyan people (7:85) and also of the Companions of the Wood (15:78). The case of Moses is mentioned apart, as his people survived to the time of our Prophet and survive to the present, and they frequently rebelled against Moses (2:49-61).

43. Those of Abraham and Lut;

44. And the Companions(2821) of the Madyan People; and Moses was rejected (in the same way). But I granted respite to the Unbelievers, and (only) after that did I punish them: but how (terrible) was my rejection (of them)!(2822)

2821 Were they the same as the Companions of the Wood? See n. 2000 to 15:78.

2822 My Wrath on them, and the complete reversal of their fortune in consequence *(Cf* 34:45 and 35:26).

45. How many populations have We destroyed, which were given to wrong- doing? They tumbled down(2823) on their roofs. And how many wells are lying idle and neglected,(2824) and castles lofty and well-built?

2823 The roofs fell in first, and the whole structure, walls and all, came tumbling after, as happens in ruins. The place was turned upside down.

2824 In a dry country like Arabia, a well stands as a symbol for a living, flourishing population, and many place-names mean "the well of so-and-so" *e.g.,* Bir 'Ali, a village just south of Madinah, the quality of whose drinking water is famous, or Abyar Ibn Hassan, a noted stopping place on the road from Makkah to Madinah, about 92 miles from Madinah.

46. Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds)(2825) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts.

2825 The word for "heart" in Arabic speech imports *both* the seat of intelligent faculties and understanding as well as the seat of affections and emotions. Those who reject Allah's Message may have their physical eyes and ears, but their hearts are blind and deaf. If their faculties of understanding were active, would they not see the Signs of Allah's Providence and Allah's Wrath in nature around them and in the cities and ruins if they travel intelligently?

47. Yet they ask thee to hasten on the Punishment! But Allah will not fail(2826) in His Promise. Verily a Day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning.

2826 If Allah gives respite, those to whom it is given have a real chance of repentance and amendment. He will not curtail His promise of respite. But on the other hand He has promised to call everyone to account for his deeds, and this involves justice and punishment for sin. This promise will also come true. It is foolish to try to hasten it. Time with Him is nothing. We keep count of time for our relative calculations. His existence is absolute, and not conditioned by Time or Place. What we call a thousand years may be nothing more than a day or a minute to Him *(Cf.* 26:204 and 37:176).

48. And to how many populations did I give respite, which(2827) were given to wrong-doing? in the end I punished them. To me is the destination (of all).

2827 The argument begun in 22:45 is now rounded oft and closed.

49. Say: "O men! I am (sent) to you only to give a clear warning:(2828)

2828 It is the Messenger's duty to convey the warning in the clearest terms to the wicked. It is not part of his duty to coerce them or judge them, or bring on the Punishment for them. That only rests with Allah. But the warning itself is full of Mercy: for it gives the highest hope to the repentant sinner who turns and comes to Allah.

50. "Those who believe and work righteousness, for them is forgiveness and a sustenance most generous.(2829)

2829 The "sustenance" must be construed in the widest sense, spiritual as well as intellectual and physical. The reward of righteousness is far more generous than any merit there may be in the creature following the Will of his Creator.

51. "But those who strive against Our Signs, to frustrate(2830) them,- they will be Companions of the Fire."

2830 It will not be in their power to frustrate Allah's Plan; all they will do is to go further and further down in their spiritual state, deeper and deeper into their Hell, *(Cf.* 34:5).

52. Never did We send a messenger or a prophet before thee, but, when he framed a desire, Satan threw some (vanity)(2831) into his desire: but Allah will cancel anything (vain) that Satan throws in, and Allah will confirm (and establish) His Signs: for Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom:(2832)

2831 Prophets and messengers (the distinction is explained in n. 2503 to 19:51) are but human. Their actions are righteous and their motives pure, but in judging things from a human point of view, the suggestion may come to their mind (from Satan) that it would be good to have power or wealth or influence for furthering Allah's cause, or that it may be good to conciliate some faction which may be irreconcilable. In fact, in Allah's Plan, it may be the opposite. Allah, in His mercy and inspiration, will cancel any false or vain suggestions of this kind, and confirm and strengthen His own Commands and make known His Will in His Signs or revelations.

2832 This clause and the similar clause at the end of the next verse are parenthetical.

53. That He may make the suggestions thrown in by Satan, but a trial(2833) for those in whose hearts is a disease and who are(2834) hardened of heart: verily the wrong-doers are in a schism far (from the Truth):

2833 If any suggestion comes to the human mind that is not in accordance with Allah's Will and Plan, it has two opposite effects: to evil minds it is a trial and a temptation from the Evil One, but to the mind well-instructed in Faith, it stands self-condemned at once, and becomes a means of strengthening the Faith and stimulating redoubled efforts to conform to the Will of Allah.

2834 *Cf.* 2:10. I understand the "disease in the heart" to be an earlier state of curse, which leads in an intensified form to a complete "hardening of the heart".

54. And that those on whom(2835) knowledge has been bestowed may learn that the (Qur´an) is the Truth from thy Lord, and that they may believe therein, and their hearts may be made humbly (open) to it: for verily Allah is the Guide of those who believe, to the Straight Way.

2835 The last clause in the last verse was parenthetical. Treat this clause as parallel with the first clause in verse 53, "that he may make", etc. Both will then connect with "Allah will confirm (and establish) His Signs" in verse 52. See n. 2833 above.

55. Those who reject Faith will not cease to be(2836) in doubt concerning (Revelation) until the Hour (of Judgment) comes suddenly upon them, or there comes to them the Penalty of a Day of Disaster.

2836 The penalty of deliberately rejecting Faith is that the person doing so closes the channels of Mercy that flow from Allah. He will always be subject to doubts and superstitions, until the time comes when all earthly scales fall from his spiritual eyes. But then there will be no time for Repentance: it will be too late to profit by the guidance of Allah given through Revelation.

56. On that Day of Dominion(2837) will be that of Allah. He will judge between them: so those who believe and work righteous deeds will be in Gardens of Delight.

2837 Such power as Evil has over those who yield to it (17:62-64) will then be gone, as the respite granted to Satan will be over, and Allah's Kingdom will be established.

57. And for those who reject Faith and deny our Signs, there will be a humiliating Punishment.

58. Those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah, and are then slain or die,- On them will Allah bestow verily a goodly Provision:(2838) Truly Allah is He Who bestows the best provision.

2838 *Rizq:* sustenance, provision. I have preferred the latter word here, because after death we can only think of *rizq* in a large metaphorical sense, *i.e.,* all the provision necessary to equip the person for a full and happy Future Life, and also, I think, a provision for his dependants and near and dear ones in this life. (R).

59. Verily He will admit them to a place with which they shall be well pleased: for Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.(2839)

2839 Martyrdom is the sacrifice of life in the service of Allah. Its reward is therefore even greater than that of an ordinarily good life. The martyr's sins are forgiven by the very act of martyrdom, which implies service and self-surrender in the highest sense of the word. Allah knows all his past life but will forbear from calling him to account for things that should strictly come into his account.

60. That (is so). And if one has retaliated to no greater extent than the injury he received, and is again set upon inordinately, Allah will help him: for Allah is One that blots out (sins) and forgives (again and again).(2840)

2840 Ordinarily Muslims are enjoined to bear injuries with patience and return good for evil (23:96). But there are occasions when human feelings get the better of our wise resolutions, or when, in a state of conflict or war, we return "as good as we get ". In that case our retaliation is permissible, provided the injury we inflict is not greater than that we receive. After such retaliation, we are even, but if the other side again acts aggressively and goes beyond all bounds in attacking us, we are entitled to protection from Allah in spite of all our faults; for Allah is One that blots out our sins, and forgives again and again.

61. That is because Allah merges night into day, and He merges day into night, and verily it is Allah Who hears and sees (all things).(2841)

2841 To some it may appear strange or even irreconcilable that Allah should be both Merciful and Just: that He should both protect His devotees and yet ask for their self-sacrifice; that he should command them to return good for evil, and yet permit retaliation under certain restrictions. But such thoughts are shortsighted. Do they not see many inconsistencies in all Life, all Nature, and all Creation? Why, even in such simple phenomena as Night and Day, the one merges into the other, and no one can tell when precisely the one begins and the other ends. Yet we can see in a rough sort of way that the one gives rest and the other activity, that the one reveals the beauties of the starry heavens and the other the splendour of the sun. In countless ways we can see there the wisdom and the fine artistry of Allah. And there are subtle nuances and mergings in nature that our intelligence can hardly penetrate. Now human life and human relations are far more complicated, and it is Allah alone Who can see all the subtle distinctions and hear the cries of *all His* creatures, in a world which Tennyson described as "red in tooth and claw " *(Cf.* 35:13).'

62. That is because Allah - He(2842) is the Reality; and those besides Him whom they invoke,- they are but vain Falsehood: verily Allah is He, Most High, Most Great.(2843)

2842 The emphatic construction calls attention to the fact that Allah is the only abiding Reality. All else is like shadows that will pass away *(Cf.* 31:30).

2843 See n. 2841 above Our vain imaginings, groundless doubts, foolish subtleties, and false worship should all give place to trust and faith in the one and only Reality.

63. Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and forthwith the earth becomes clothed with green? for Allah is He Who understands(2844) the finest mysteries, and is well-acquainted (with them).

2844 *La tif,* as a name of Allah, is as difficult to define in words as the idea it seeks to represent is difficult to grasp in our minds. It implies: (1) fine, subtle (the basic meaning); (2) so fine and subtle as to be imperceptible to human sight; (3) so pure as to be incomprehensible; (4) with sight so perfect as to see and understand the finest subtleties and mysteries (*Cf.* 33:34); (5) so kind and gracious as to bestow gifts of the most refined kind; extraordinarily gracious and understanding. No. 4 is the predominant meaning here and in 12:100; Nos. 2 and 3 in 6:103; and No. 5 in 42:19; but every shade of meaning must be borne in mind in each case, as a subsidiary factor in the spiritual melody.

64. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: for verily Allah,- He is free of all wants, Worthy of all Praise.(2845)

2845 Each of the verses 22:61 -63 mentioned two attributes of Allah with reference to the contents of that verse. This verse now sums up the whole argument, and the two attributes with which it closes sum up the idea by which we can understand Allah's goodness. Allah's loving kindness and mercies are not like those of human creatures who all depend upon one another, and often expect some kindness or recognition in return. Allah is above all wants and depends in no way whatever on His creatures. His mercies have therefore a special quality, which we cannot describe except by gratefully singing the praises of Allah. *Cf.* 2:267.

65. Seest thou not that Allah has made subject to you (men) all that is on the earth, and the ships that sail(2846) through the sea by His Command? He withholds the sky (rain)(2847) from failing on the earth except by His leave: for Allah is Most Kind and Most Merciful to man.

2846 Land and sea have been made subject to man by Allah's command, so that man can develop his life freely on earth.

2847 *Sama* 'means (1) something high, (2) a roof, a ceiling, (3) the sky, the canopy of heaven, (4) cloud or rain. I understand the last meaning here, though most authorities seem to render it by some such word as "sky". If we understand rain here, we have a complete picture of the three elements in which man lives-land, air and sea. Rain is also appropriate for mention with Allah's kindness and mercy. He regulates the rain for man's benefit.

66. It is He Who gave you life, will cause you to die, and will again give you life: Truly man is a most ungrateful creature!

67. To every People have We appointed rites and ceremonies(2848) which they must follow: let them not then dispute with thee on the matter, but do thou invite (them) to thy Lord: for thou art assuredly on the Right Way.

2848 Rites and ceremonies may appear to be an unimportant matter compared with "weightier matters of the Law" and with the higher needs of man's spiritual nature. But they are necessary for social and religious organisation, and their effect on the individual himself is not to be despised. In any case, as they are visible external symbols, they give rise to the most heated controversies. Such controversies are to be deprecated. That does not mean that our rites and ceremonies are to be made light of. Those in Islam rest on the highest social and religious needs of man, and if we are convinced that we are on the Right Way , we should invite all to join us, without entering into controversies about such matters.

68. If they do wrangle with thee, say, "(Allah) knows best what it is ye are doing."(2849)

2849 You are only wrangling about matters about which you have no knowledge nor any deep religious feeling. The springs of your conduct are all open before Allah, and He will judge you.'

69. "(Allah) will judge between you on the Day of Judgment concerning the matters in which ye differ."(2850)

2850 You not only find fault with the very few and simple rites and ceremonies in Islam: you, outside Islam, have no rites and ceremonies which you are yourselves agreed upon, either as Christians or as Jews, or one compared with the other.'

70. Knowest thou not that Allah knows all that is in heaven and on earth? Indeed it is all in a Record, and that is easy for Allah.(2851)

2851 We human beings can only think of knowledge being accurately and permanently preserved by means of a record. Allah's knowledge has all the qualities of a perfect record, and it is moreover complete and comprehensive. This is not difficult for Him from whom flows all knowledge and intelligence *(Cf.* 27:74-75).

71. Yet they worship, besides Allah, things for which no authority has been sent down to them, and of which they have (really) no knowledge: for those that do wrong there is no helper.(2852)

2852 When plain common-sense shows the absurdity of false worship, behind which there is neither knowledge, intelligence, nor authority (quite the contrary), who or what can help the false misguided creatures who dishonour Allah by false worship?

72. When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them, thou wilt notice a denial(2853) on the faces of the

Unbelievers! they nearly attack with violence those who rehearse Our Signs to them. Say, "Shall I tell you of something (far) worse than these Signs?(2854) It is the Fire (of Hell)! Allah has promised it to the Unbelievers! and evil is that destination!"

2853 *Munkar.* (1) a refusal to accept something offered; (2) a denial of something stated or pointed out; (3) a feeling of disapproval or active aversion, or disgust.

2854 There is irony here. 'You think Allah's revelations and Signs are distasteful to you! There will be something far more distasteful to you if you do not repent! What do you say to the inevitable Punishment?'

73. O men! Here is a parable set forth! listen to it! Those on whom, besides Allah, ye call, cannot create (even) a fly, if they all met together for the purpose! and if the fly should snatch away anything from them, they would have no power to release it from the fly. Feeble are those who petition(2855) and those whom they petition!

2855 Both idols and their worshippers are poor, foolish, feeble creatures!

74. No just estimate have they made of Allah. for Allah is He Who is strong and able to Carry out His Will.(2856)

2856 No one who descends to the base forms of false worship can have a true idea of Allah. Allah has all power, and He is fully able to carry out every part of His Will and Plan. He is exalted above all in power and dignity. *Cf.* 22:40 and n. 2818 for the full meaning of ' *Aziz* (see also 26:9).

75. Allah chooses Messengers(2857) from angels and from men for Allah is He Who hears and sees (all things).(2858)

2857 Men are chosen as Messengers to ordinary men; for ordinary men will riot be able to understand and be in communion with beings so refined as angels. But angels are sent as Messengers to Allah's chosen prophets, to convey the Message from time to time. In either case they are chosen by Allah, are subject to Allah's Will, and should not be worshipped as gods.

2858 As Allah regards the humblest of His creatures and hears their prayer, He sends men messengers out of their own brethren (see last note), and to such messengers He communicates the highest spiritual Truths through His angels.

76. He knows what is before them and what is behind them: and to Allah go back all questions (for decision).(2859)

2859 Time, before or behind, may be of some importance to men. They may dispute as to what was the first Message, and what is the last Message. To Allah this question of priority and posteriority is of no consequence. All questions go back ultimately to him and are judged on their merits.

77. O ye who believe! bow down, prostrate yourselves, and adore your Lord; and do good; that ye may prosper.(2860)

2860 *Prosper,* in a spiritual sense, both in this life and the Hereafter.

78. And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline).(2861) He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you(2862) in religion; it is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before(2863) and in this (Revelation); that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for mankind!(2864) So establish regular Prayer, give regular Charity, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector - the Best to protect and the Best to help!

2861 As far as the striving is concerned with Jihad in the narrow sense, see the limitations in n. 204 to 2:190 and n. 205 to 2:191. But the words are perfectly general and apply to all true and unselfish striving for spiritual good.

2862 The Jews were hampered by many restrictions, and their religion was racial. Christianity, as originally preached, was a hermit religion: "sell whatsoever thou hast" (Mark 10:21): "take no thought for the morrow" (Matt. 6:34). Islam, as originally preached, gives freedom and full play to man's faculties of every kind. It is universal, and claims to date from Adam: father Abraham is mentioned as the great Ancestor of those among whom Islam was first preached (Jews, Christians, and Arab Quraysh).

2863 *Before:* see Abraham's prayer in 2:128. *In this revelation:* in this very verse, as well as in other places.

2864 See 2:143, and notes 143 and 144. As the Prophet is a guide and witnesses among us, so Muslims ought to be witneses amongst mankind. The best witness to Allah's Truth are those who show its light in their lives.



23. Al Mu'minun (The Believers)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. The believers must (eventually) win through,-(2865)

2865 *Aflaha:* win through, prosper, succeed, achieve their aims or obtain salvation from sorrow and all evil. This verse connects on with verses 10 and 11 below. The success or victory may come in this world, but is certain and lasting in the world to come.

2. Those who humble themselves(2866) in their prayers;

2866 Humility in prayer as regards (1) their estimate of their own worth in Allah's presence, (2) as regards their estimate of their own powers or strength unless they are helped by Allah, and (3) as regards the petitions they offer to Allah.

3. Who avoid vain talk;

4. Who are active in deeds of charity;

5. Who abstain from sex,(2867)

2867 The Muslim must guard himself against ever;' kind of sex abuse or sex perversion. The new psychology associated with the name of Freud traces many of our hidden motives to sex, and it is common knowledge that our refinement or degradation may be measured by the hidden workings of our sex instincts. But even the natural and lawful exercise of sex is restricted to the marriage bond, under which the rights of both parties are duly regulated and maintained.

6. Except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or (the captives) whom their right hands possess,-(2868) for (in their case) they are free from blame,

2868 This is further explained and amplified in 4:25. It will be seen there that the status of a captive when raised to freedom by marriage is the same as that of a free woman as regards her rights, but more lenient as regards the punishment to be inflicted if she falls from virtue.

7. But those whose desires exceed those limits are transgressors;-

8. Those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants;(2869)

2869 Trusts may be express or implied. Express trusts are those where property is entrusted or duties are assigned by some one to some other whom he trusts, to carry out either immediately or in specified contingencies, such as death. Implied trusts arise out of power, or position, or opportunity; *e.g.,* a king holds his kingdom on trust from Allah for his subjects: the Afghan official phrase for their kingdom used to be *Dawlat-i-Khuda-dad* ('God-given kingdom'). The subject of covenants, express and implied, has been discussed in n. 682 to 5:1. Covenants create obligations, and express and implied trusts and covenants taken together cover the whole field of obligations.

9. And who (strictly) guard(2870) their prayers;-

2870 In verse 2 we were directed to the spirit of humility and earnestness in our prayers. Here we are told how necessary the habit of regular prayer is to our spiritual well-being and development, as it brings us closer to Allah, and thus sums up the light of the seven jewels of our Faith, *viz.:* (1) humility, (2) avoidance of vanity, (3) charity, (4) sex purity, (5) fidelity to trusts, and (6) to covenants, and (7) an earnest desire to get closer to Allah.

10. These will be the heirs,(2871)

2871 *Cf.* 21:105, where it is said that the righteous will inherit the earth. In the first verse of this Surah, the final success or victory is referred to. Truth will prevail even on this earth, but it may not be for any individual men of righteousness to see it: it may be in the time of their heirs and successors. But in the life to come, there is no doubt that every man will see the fruit of his life here, and the righteous will *inherit* heaven, in the sense that they will attain it after their death here.

11. Who will inherit Paradise: they will dwell therein (for ever).

12. Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay);(2872)

2872 In this beautiful passage, Allah's creative work, as far as man is concerned, is recapitulated, in order to show man's real position in this life, and the certainty of the future: to which he was referred for his reward in verses 10-11 above. For the various stages of creation, seen. 120 to 2:117. Here we are not concerned with the earliest stage, the creation of primeval matter out of nothing. It is also a process of creation when inorganic matter becomes living matter. Thus inorganic constituents of the earth are absorbed into living matter by way of food and living matter reproduces itself by means of sperm. This is deposited in the ovum and fertilises it and rests for a time in security in the mother's womb. The first change in the fertilised ovum is the conversion into a sort of clot of thickly congealed blood; the zygote cells grow by segmentation; then the mass gradually assumes shape in its growth as a foetus. From the lump develop bones and flesh and organs and a nervous system. So far man's growth is like that of an animal, but a further process takes place which makes the infant animal into the infant man. This is the breathing of Allah's spirit into him (15:29): that process need not be precisely at a given point of time. It may be a continuous process parallel to that of physical growth. The child is born: it grows; it decays and dies; but after death another chapter opens for the individual, and it is to remind us of this most momentous chapter that the previous stages are recapitulated.

13. Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest,(2873) firmly fixed;

2873 The growth in the foetal stage is silent and unseen. The foetus is protected in the mother's womb like a king in a castle; it is firmly fixed, and gets the protection of the mother's body, on which it depends for its own growth until birth.

14. Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump; then we made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then we developed out of it another creature.(2874) So blessed be Allah, the best to create!

2874 From a mere animal, we now consider man as man. Is it not a Sign of wonder in itself that from dry dust *(turab,* 22:5) or inorganic matter should be made protoplasm (moist clay or organic matter); from it should grow a new animal life; and out of it should grow human life, with all its capacities and responsibilities? Man carries within himself Signs of Allah's wisdom and power, and he can see them every day in the universe around him.

15. After that, at length ye will die(2875)

2875 Our physical death in this mortal life seems to make a break. But if it were the end of all, our life becomes meaningless. Our own instinct tells us that it cannot be so, and Allah assures us that there will be a resurrection for judgement.

16. Again, on the Day of Judgment, will ye be raised up.

17. And We have made, above you, seven tracts;(2876) and We are never unmindful of (our) Creation.(2877)

2876 *Tara'iq.* tracts, roads, orbits, or paths of motion in the visible heavens. These seven are regular and clearly marked to our eyes, in the immense space that we see around us. We must go to astronomy to form any plausible theories of these motions. But their simplest observation gives us a sublime view of beauty, order, and grandeur in the universe. The assurance given in the next clause, that Allah cares for us and all His Creation, calls our attention to Allah's goodness, which is further illustrated in the subsequent verses.

2877 Allah's care for His Creation is ceaseless. A few examples of His care for our physical well-being are given in verses 18-22, and for our spiritual well-being, in Sections 2 to 5.

18. And We send down water from the sky according to(2878) (due) measure, and We cause it to soak in the soil; and We certainly are able to drain it off (with ease).

2878 Normally the rain comes well distributed; it soaks into the soil; the moisture is retained for a long time in all high grounds; it soaks and penetrates through many layers of soil and forms the architecture of physical geography; the retentive powers of higher soil enable rivers to flow perennially even where, as in India, the rainfall is seasonal and confined to a few months in the year. Another form in which water comes down from the sky according to due measure is in snow and hail: these also have their place in the economy of air and soil. Were it not for snow and glaciers in the higher mountain regions, some of the rivers would fail in their abundant flow. As wonderful as the supply of water and moisture is its drainage. It returns to the sea and air in all sorts of ways, and the formation of mist and clouds repeats the cycle. Were it not for the drainage and the clearance of the waters, we should have floods and waterlogging, as happens when the normal processes of nature are temporarily obstructed. The same thing happens when the rain comes down in other than due measure. These abnormal conditions also have their value. But how grateful should man be for Allah's gifts in the ceaseless processes of nature on such an enormous scale!

19. With it We grow for you gardens of date-palms and vines: in them have ye abundant fruits: and of them ye eat (and have enjoyment),-(2879)

2879 *Cf.* 7:19 and n. 776 to 5:66.

20. Also a tree springing out of Mount Sinai,(2880) which produces oil, and relish for those who use it for food.

2880 For Arabia the best olives grow round about Mount Sinai . The fig, the olive, Mount Sinai, and the sacred city of Makkah are mentioned together in association in 95:1-3, where we shall consider the mystic meaning. Olive oil is an ingredient in medicinal ointments and in ointments used for religious ceremonies such as the consecration of kings. It has thus a symbolic meaning. If used for food, the olive has a delicious flavour. *Cf.* also 24:35, where the olive is called a Blessed Tree, and n. 3000.

21. And in cattle (too) ye have an instructive example:(2881) from within their bodies We produce (milk) for you to drink; there are, in them, (besides), numerous (other) benefits for you; and of their (meat) ye eat;

2881 *'Ibrah:* the root meaning of the verb is "to interpret, to expound, or instruct', as in 12:43; the noun means an interpretation, or example or Sign that instructs, as here and in 16:66, or gives a warning, as in 3:13. From cattle we get milk and meat; also from their skins we make leather for shoes, boots, straps, saddlery, and numerous other uses; from camel's hair and sheep's wool we weave cloth,

hangings, carpets, etc.: from the horns of cattle we make cups and articles of ornament or use; and camels, horses, donkeys, mules, etc., are used for riding, carrying loads, or drawing vehicles *(Cf.* 36:71-73).

22. An on them, as well as in slips, ye side.

23. (Further, We sent a long line of prophets for your instruction).(2882) We sent Noah to his people:(2883) He said, "O my people! worship Allah. Ye have no other god but Him. Will ye not fear (Him)?"(2884)

2882 The material gifts having been mentioned, which we receive from a wise and kindly Providence , our attention is now directed to Allah's Providence in spiritual matters. He sent Teachers to instruct and guide us, and though they were mocked, rejected, and accused of falsehood and selfishness, they were protected by Allah, and Allah's Truth at length prevailed.

2883 "People" here is almost equivalent to "contemporaries".

2884 *Cf.* 7:59. To fear Allah is to lead righteous lives and eschew evil.

24. The chiefs of the Unbelievers among his people said: "He is no more than a man like yourselves: his wish is to assert his superiority over you: if Allah had wished(2885) (to send messengers), He could have sent down angels; never did we hear such a thing (as he says), among our ancestors of old."

2885 They attribute altogether wrong motives to him (such as they would have actuated themselves), in saying that he was trying to establish his own personal superiority over them by his preaching. Then they accuse him of falsehood in claiming to bring a message of Allah. "If, they say, "Allah had wished to send us messengers, He would have sent angels, not a man like ourselves and from among ourselves. Our ancestors did not worship One God: why should we?"

25. (And some said): "He is(2886) only a man possessed: wait (and have patience) with him for a time."

2886 I construe this to be a speech of another group among them. They thought he was mad, and best left alone. His madness would run out, or he would come to an evil end.

26. (Noah) said: "O my Lord! help me: for that they accuse me of falsehood!"

27. So We inspired him (with this message): "Construct the Ark within Our sight(2887) and under Our guidance: then when comes Our Command, and the fountains of the earth(2888) gush forth, take thou on board pairs of every species, male(2889) and female, and thy family- except those of them against whom the Word has already gone forth:(2890) And address Me not in favour of the wrong-doers; for they shall be drowned (in the Flood).

2887 *Cf.* this whole passage with 11:36-49, and notes thereon.

2888 See n. 1533 to 11:40, where the word *Tannur is* explained.

2889 Seen. 1534 to 11:40.

2890 Seen. 1535 to 11:40.

28. And when thou hast embarked(2891) on the Ark - thou and those with thee,- say: "Praise be to Allah, Who has saved us from the people who do wrong."

2891 For *istawa* see 1386 to 10:3. Here the meaning is: mounted on board, ascended, embarked.

29. And say: "O my Lord!(2892) enable me to disembark with thy blessing: for Thou art the Best to enable (us) to disembark."

2892 This second prayer was inspired when the Flood subsided, and the time came for disembarkation.

30. Verily in this there are Signs (for men to understand); (thus) do We try (men).(2893)

2893 Noah's contemporaries had all sorts of chances and warnings, but they refused to believe and perished. But Allah's Truth survived, and it went to the next and succeeding generations. Will not mankind understand?

31. Then We raised after them another generation.

32. And We sent to them a messenger from among themselves,(2894) (saying), "Worship Allah. ye have no other god but Him. Will ye not fear (Him)?"

2894 If this refers to any particular prophet, it must be Hud whose mission was to the 'Ad people, or to Salih, whose mission was to the Thamud people. That is the sequence after Noah in 11:50-60 and 61-68. But 1 think that as the name is not mentioned, we are to understand in general the type of post-Flood prophets until we come later on to Moses and Jesus. The object here is not to recount the stories, but to show that the resistance of the wicked made no difference to the triumph of Allah's Holy Truth.

33. And the chiefs of his people, who disbelieved and denied the Meeting in the Hereafter, and on whom We had bestowed the good things of this life, said: "He is no more than a man like yourselves: he eats of that of which ye eat, and drinks of what ye drink.

34. "If ye obey a man like yourselves, behold, it is certain ye will be lost.(2895)

2895 The type of the narrow Sybarite, who enjoys the good things of this life, denies a future life, and is jealous of any one who presumes to widen his horizon, is here described in a few masterly strokes. He is bored by any mention of the serious things beyond his ken. What good is it, he says, to talk about the future? Enjoy the present. The gain is all in the present: the loss is all in the future.

35. "Does he promise that when ye die and become dust and bones, ye shall be brought forth (again)?

36. "Far, very far is that which ye are promised!

37. "There is nothing but our life in this world! We shall die and we live!(2896) But we shall never be raised up again!

2896 They seem to say: "There is no future life: that we shall die is certain; that we have this life is certain: some die, some are born, some live; and so the cycle continues: but how can dead men be raised to life?" *(Cf.* n. 4763)

38. "He is only a man who invents a lie against Allah, but we are not the ones to believe in him!"(2897)

2897 "He is only a fool, and invents things, and attributes them to Allah's inspiration! We are too wise, to believe such things!"

39. (The prophet) said: "O my Lord! help me: for that they accuse me of falsehood."(2898)

2898 See above, 23:26. Every prophet is maligned and persecuted: it is always the same story with them, told in different ways.

40. ((Allah)) said: "In but a little while, they are sure to be sorry!"(2899)

2899 When the Punishment conies, they will be sorry for themselves, but it will be too late then.

41. Then the Blast(2900) overtook them with justice, and We made them as rubbish of dead leaves(2901) (floating on the stream of Time)! So away with the people who do wrong!

2900 See 11:66, and notes 1563 and 1561.

2901 *Ghutha'*: rubbish of dead leaves, or scum floating on a torrent.

42. Then We raised after them other generations.

43. No people can hasten their term, nor can they delay (it).

44. Then sent We our messengers in succession: every time there came to a people their messenger, they accused him of falsehood: so We made them follow each other (in punishment): We made them as a tale (that is told):(2902) So away with a people that will not believe!

2902 Their habitations and their organisation have been wiped out. What remains is merely a vague story of their existence, a tale that is told. Where their name remains, which is not always the case, it is only a byword, suggesting all that is unstable and ephemeral-"to point a moral and adorn a tale".

45. Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron, with Our Signs and authority manifest,(2903)

2903 Moses and Aaron had a twofold mission: (1) to Pharaoh and his Court, which failed because of Egyptian arrogance; (2) to the Israelites, for whom the Law was received on Mount Sinai , but they repeatedly rebelled against Allah. In both cases there were miracles ("Clear Signs") and other proofs which showed that they came at Allah's command and were inspired by His authority.

46. To Pharaoh and his Chiefs: But these behaved insolently: they were an arrogant people.

47. They said: "Shall we believe in two men like ourselves? And their people are subject(2904) to us!"

2904 Racial arrogance made the Egyptians say, 'These men belong to a race which we hold in subjection as our slaves: how can we accept them as messengers of Allah?'

48. So they accused them of falsehood, and they became of those who were destroyed.

49. And We gave Moses the Book, in order that they might receive guidance.(2905)

2905 Here the reference is to the second part of the mission of Moses, that to the Israelites, which the Israelites rendered ineffective by their want of faith. See n. 2903 above.

50. And We made the son of Mary and his mother as a sign:(2906) We gave them both shelter on high ground, affording rest and security and furnished with springs.(2907)

2906 The virgin birth of Jesus was a miracle both for him and his mother. She was falsely accused of unchastity, but the child Jesus triumphantly vindicated her by his own miracles (19:27-33), and showed by his life the meanness of the calumny against his mother.

2907 There is no need to look far for the place where mother and child were given secure shelter. It is described in 19:22-26. It was the place to which she withdrew to be delivered when the time drew near. There was a fruitful palm tree, evidently on high ground, for beneath it flowed a spring. She retired there in seclusion, and she and her child rested there until it was time for her to go to her people with her child.

51. O ye messengers! enjoy(2908) (all) things good and pure, and work righteousness: for I am well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.

2908 Literally, "eat". See n. 776 to 5:66. The prophets of Allah do not pose as ascetics, but receive gratefully all Allah's gifts, and show their gratitude by their righteous lives. (R).

52. And verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood.(2909) And I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore fear Me (and no other).

2909 *Cf.* 21:92-93. All prophets form one Brotherhood: their Message is one, and their religion and teaching are one: they serve the One True God, Who loves and cherishes them; and they owe their duty to Him and Him alone.

53. But people have cut off their affair (of unity), between them, into sects: each party rejoices in that which is with itself.(2910)

2910 The people who began to trade on the names of the prophets cut off that unity and made sects; and each sect rejoices in its own narrow doctrine, instead of taking the universal teaching of Unity from Allah. But this sectarian confusion is of man's making. It will last for a time, but the rays of Truth and Unity will finally dissipate it.

54. But leave them in their confused ignorance for a time.

55. Do they think that because We have granted them abundance of wealth and sons,

56. We would hasten them on in every good? Nay, they do not understand.(2911)

2911 Worldly wealth, power, and influence may be but trials. Let not their possessors think that they are in themselves things that will necessarily bring them happiness.

57. Verily those who live in awe for fear of their Lord;

58. Those who believe in the Signs of their Lord;

59. Those who join not (in worship) partners with their Lord;

60. And those who dispense their charity with their hearts(2912) full of fear, because they will return to their Lord;-

2912 Their hearts are full of reverence for Allah and fear lest their charity or their hearts be not good enough for acceptance before their Lord; for they have the certainty of a future life, in which they will stand before the Judgement Seat. They fear for their own worthiness, but they hope in Faith.

61. It is these who hasten in every good work, and these who are foremost in them.

62. On no soul do We place a burden greater than it can bear:(2913) before Us is a record which clearly shows the truth:(2914) they will never be wronged.

2913 *Cf.* 2:286 and n. 339.

2914 The record speaks clearly, and shows exactly what each soul has done and thought, and what is due to it in justice. The worst will receive full justice. The best will receive far more than their due: 28:84.

63. But their hearts are in confused ignorance(2915) of this; and there are, besides that, deeds of theirs,(2916) which they will (continue) to do,-

2915 This is said of the Unbelievers who rejected Faith and rejoiced in the vanities of this world. In spite of the proclamation of Truth, they are doubtful of the future Life and Judgement.

2916 In addition to their rejection of Faith, they have against them positive deeds of wrongdoing, from which, on account of their contempt of the Light from Allah, they will not desist until they are sharply pulled up for punishment: and then repentance will be too late!

64. Until, when We seize in Punishment those of them who received the good things of this world, behold, they will groan in supplication!

65. (It will be said): "Groan not in supplication this day: for ye shall certainly not be helped by Us.

66. "My Signs used to be rehearsed to you, but ye used to turn back on your heels-

67. "In arrogance: talking nonsense about the (Qur´an), like one telling fables by night."(2917)

2917 *Samir:* one who remains awake by night, one who passes the night in talk or in the recital of stories of romances, a favourite amusement in the Days of Ignorance. *(Cf.* n. 2605 and n, 2608)

68. Do they not ponder over the Word (of Allah., or has anything (new) come to them that did not come to their fathers of old?(2918)

2918 If they ponder over the matter, they will find that Allah's Message to humanity is as old as Adam. It is good for all ages. It never grows old, and it is never new.

69. Or do they not recognise their Messenger, that they deny him?

70. Or do they say, "He is possessed"? Nay, he has brought them the Truth, but most of them hate the Truth.

71. If the Truth had been in accord with their desires, truly the heavens and the earth, and all beings therein would have been in confusion(2919) and corruption! Nay, We have sent them their admonition, but they turn away from their admonition.

2919 Allah is All-Wise and All-Good, and His architecture of the universe is on a perfect Plan. If these poor, low, selfish, ignorant creatures were to plan it according to their hearts' desires, it would be a dreadful world, full of confusion and corruption.

72. Or is it that thou askest them for some(2920) recompense? But the recompense of thy Lord is best: He is the Best of those who give sustenance.

2920 This is the last of the questions, beginning with 23:68 above, showing the absurdity of the position taken up by the Unbelievers. (1) The Message of Allah is as old as humanity; why do they fight shy of it? (2) They have known their Prophet to be true and righteous: why do they deny him? (3) Is it madness to bring the bitter Truth before them? (4) Does the Prophet ask any worldly reward from them? If not, why do they reject his unselfish efforts for their own good?

73. But verily thou callest them to the Straight Way;

74. And verily those who believe not in the Hereafter are deviating from that Way.

75. If We had mercy on them and removed the distress(2921) which is on them, they would obstinately persist in their transgression, wandering in distraction to and fro.

2921 The reference is to a very severe famine felt in Makkah, which was attributed by the Unbelievers to the presence of the Prophet among them and his preaching against their gods. As this is a Makkan Surah, the famine referred to must be that described by Ibn Kathir as having occurred in the 8th year of the Mission , say about four years before the Hijrah. There was also a post-Hijrah famine, which is referred to by Bukhan, but that was a later event.

76. We inflicted Punishment(2922) on them, but they humbled not themselves to their Lord, nor do they submissively entreat (Him)!-

2922 Some Commentators understand the battle of Badr to be meant here: if so, this particular verse would be of the Madinah period. But it is better to understand it as referring to the same "distress" as in the preceding verse, or to punishments in general, which obstinate sinners refuse to take as warnings given to them to mend their ways and turn in repentance to Allah.

77. Until We open on them a gate leading to a severe Punishment: then Lo! they will be plunged in despair therein!(2923)

2923 *Cf.* 6:44. If the little trials in the present life will not open their eyes, will great trials do so? Unfortunately they only cause in the wicked a feeling of despair. In the final Punishment after the Judgement, it will be too late for them to repent, and despair will be their only lot.

78. It is He Who has created for you (the faculties of) hearing, sight, feeling(2924) and understanding: little thanks it is ye give!

2924 As elsewhere, "heart" is to be understood as the seat both of feeling and intelligence. 'All the means by which knowledge can be gathered, judgement formed, and goodness cultivated, are provided for you by Allah. If you were grateful, you would use those in His service, which is expressed in your service to your fellow men. But instead you ignore these gifts, question Allah's Providence , and blaspheme against Him!'

79. And He has multiplied you through the earth, and to Him shall ye be gathered back.

80. It is He Who gives life and death, and to Him (is due) the alternation(2925) of Night and Day: will ye not then understand?

2925 The alternation of Night and Day stands here as a symbol for all the beneficent processes of Nature provided by Allah for the comfort and growth of man's outer and inner life.

81. On the contrary they say things similar to what the ancients said.(2926)

2926 And they are the more culpable, as they have received a later and more complete revelation. Why should they now stand on the primitive ideas of their ancestors?

82. They say: "What! when we die and become dust and bones, could we really be raised up again?

83. "Such things have been promised to us and to our fathers before! they are nothing but tales of the ancients!"

84. Say: "To whom belong the earth and all beings therein? (say) if ye know!"

85. They will say, "To Allah." say: "Yet will ye not receive admonition?"(2927)

2927 If their argument is that such things about a future life cannot be known or proved, they are referred to the things which are actually before them. The tangible things of the earth-can they postulate their order or government except by a Power of Force or Energy outside them? They will admit that there is such a Power or Force or Energy, We call it Allah. Go a step further. We see a sublime Universe in the heavens above, stretching far, far beyond our ken. They will admit its existence and its grandeur. We ask them to entertain a feeling of reverence for the Power behind it, and to understand their own littleness and their dependence upon that Power *(Cf.* 29:61 and 31:25).

86. Say: "Who is the Lord of the seven heavens, and the Lord of the Throne (of Glory) Supreme?"(2928)

2928 *Cf.* 9:129.

87. They will say, "(They belong) to Allah." Say: "Will ye not then be filled with awe?"(2929)

2929 See n. 2927 above. 'If this great and glorious Universe inspires you with awe, surely the Power behind is more worthy of your awe, especially if you compare your dependence and its dependence upon Him.'

88. Say: "Who is it in whose hands is the governance of all things,- who protects (all), but is not protected (of any)? (say) if ye know."

89. They will say, "(It belongs) to Allah." Say: "Then how are ye deluded?"(2930)

2930 The order and unity of purpose in the Universe argue unity of design and goodness in its Maker. Is it not then sheer madness for you to run after fancies and fail to understand and obey His Will? It is delusion in you to seek other than Allah.'

90. We have sent them the Truth: but they indeed practise falsehood!

91. No son did Allah beget, nor is there any god along with Him: (if there were many gods), behold, each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have lorded it over others!(2931) Glory to Allah. (He is free) from the (sort of) things they attribute to Him!

2931 *Cf.* 17:42. The multiplicity of gods is intellectually indefensible, considering the unity of Design and Purpose in His wonderful Universe.

92. He knows what is hidden and what is open: too high is He for the partners they attribute to Him!(2932)

2932 To suppose that Allah has a son or a family or partners or companions is to have a low idea of Allah, Who is high above all such relationships. He is the One True God, and there can be none to compare with Him.

93. Say: "O my Lord! if Thou wilt show me (in my lifetime) that which they are warned against,-(2933)

2933 In the first instance, this applied to the Prophet. His subsequent Hijrah from Makkah and the eventual overthrow of the Makkan oligarchy amply prove the fulfillment of the prophecy. But in general meaning it applies to all. We are taught that evil will be visited with a terrible punishment, not only in a future life, but in this life when its cup is full and the time comes for punishment in Allah's Plan. If it has to come while we are still on the scene of this life, we are asked to pray that we may not be found in the company of those who draw such punishment on themselves. In other words we must eschew the society of evil ones.

94. "Then, O my Lord! put me not amongst the people who do wrong!"

95. And We are certainly able to show thee (in fulfilment) that against which they are warned.

96. Repel evil with that(2934) which is best: We are well acquainted with the things they say.

2934 Whether people speak evil of you, in your presence or behind your back, or they do evil to you in either of those ways, all is known to Allah. It is not for you to punish. Your best course is not to do evil in your turn, but to do what will best repel the evil. Two evils do not make a good. *Cf.* 41:34. n. 4504, and n. 2840

97. And say "O my Lord! I seek refuge with Thee from the suggestions of the Evil Ones.(2935)

2935 But in any case, shun evil for yourself, and you cannot do this without seeking the help and protection of Allah. Not only must you shun all promptings of evil, but you must shun its proximity. It may be that in retaliating on evil, or even in your curiosity to discover what evil is, you may fall into evil yourself. You should avoid going near it or anything which brings it near to you. And in this matter you should seek Allah's help.

98. "And I seek refuge with Thee O my Lord! lest they should come near me."

99. (In Falsehood will they be)(2936) Until, when death comes to one of them, he says: "O my Lord! send me back(2937) (to life),-

2936 This verse I think connects on with 23:90 above. Though Allah proclaims His Truth everywhere, the wicked cling to Falsehood until they face the reality of Death.

2937 The verb for "send me back" is in the plural in Arabic, which is construed either (1) as an emphatic form, as if the singular were repeated, or (2) as a plural of respect, though such a plural is not ordinarily used in addressing Allah, or (3) as a plural addressed to the angels, after the address to Allah in "O my Lord!"

100. "In order that I may work righteousness in the things(2938) I neglected." - "By no means! It is but a word he says."-(2939) Before them is a Partition(2940) till the Day they are raised up.

2938 The unrighteous will ask for another chance. But it will be too late then. The time for repentance will then have passed.

2939 Their request will mean nothing. It will be treated merely as an empty word of excuse. They had plenty of chances in this life. Not only did they reject them, but they did not even believe in Allah or ask for His assistance.

2940 *Barzakh:* a partition, a bar or barrier; the place or state in which people will be after death and before Judgement. *Cf.* 25:53 and 55:20. Behind them is the barrier of death, and in front of them is the *Barzakh,* partition, a quiescent state until the judgement comes.

101. Then when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no more relationships between them that Day, nor will one ask after another!(2941)

2941 The old relationships of the world will then be dissolved. Each soul will stand on its merits.

102. Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy,- they will attain salvation:(2942)

2942 Good and evil deeds will be weighed against each other. If the good deeds prevail, the soul will attain falah, *i.e.,* prosperity, well-being, bliss, or salvation; if the contrary, there will be the misery and anguish of Hell.

103. But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls,(2943) in Hell will they abide.

2943 The loss or perdition will not mean that they will die and feel no more: 14:17. The punishment will mean nothing, if there was no sensibility, but total annihilation.

104. The Fire will burn their faces, and they will therein grin, with their lips displaced.(2944)

2944 That is to say, their faces will be disfigured with anguish, and their lips will quiver and fall out of place, exposing their teeth.

105. "Were not My Signs rehearsed to you, and ye did but treat them as falsehood?"

106. They will say: "our Lord! Our misfortune overwhelmed us,(2945) and we became a people astray!

2945 'The evil in us conquered us; it was our misfortunes that we surrendered to evil, and went astray.' They forget that it was by their own deliberate choice that they surrendered to evil, and they are reminded in verses 109-110 of the ridicule with which they covered godly men in their life on earth.

107. "Our Lord! bring us out of this: if ever we return (to Evil), then shall we be wrong-doers indeed!"

108. He will say: "Be ye driven into it (with ignominy)! And speak ye not to Me!(2946)

2946 After their flouting of Allah's Signs and their mockery of godly men on earth, they have forfeited their right to plead for mercy before Allah's Throne.

109. "A part of My servants there was, who used to pray ´our Lord! we believe; then do Thou forgive us, and have mercy upon us: For Thou art the Best of those who show mercy!"

110. "But ye treated them with ridicule, so much so that (ridicule of) them made you(2947) forget My Message while ye were laughing at them!

2947 Literally, 'they make you forget My Message'. The ungodly were so occupied in the backbiting and ridicule of the godly that the godly themselves became the unconscious cause of the ungodly forgetting the warnings declared by Allah against

those who do not treat His Signs seriously. Thus evil often brings about its own ruin through the instrumentality of those whom it would make its victims.

111. "I have rewarded them this Day for their patience and constancy: they are indeed the ones that have achieved Bliss..."

112. He will say:(2948) "What number of years did ye stay on earth?"

2948 The Hafs reading is "Qala", "He will say". This follows the Kufah Qira'ah. The Basrah Qira'ah reads *"Qul"*, "Say" (in the imperative). The point is only one of grammatical construction. See n. 2666 to 21:4. (R).

113. They will say: "We stayed a day or part of a day:(2949) but ask those who keep account."

2949 The question and answer about Time imply two things. (1) The attention of the ungodly is drawn to the extremely short time of the life in this world, compared to the eternity which they face: they are made to see this, and to realise how mistaken they were in their comparative valuation of things spiritual and things material. (2) Time, as we know it now, will have faded away and appear as almost nothing. It is just a matter relative to this life of temporary probation. *Cf.* the experience of the Companions of the Cave: 18:19.

114. He will say: "Ye stayed not but a little,- if ye had only known!

115. "Did ye then think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to Us (for account)?"(2950)

2950 Allah's Creation is not without a high serious purpose. It is not vain, or for mere play or sport. As far as man is concerned, the highest issues for him hang on his behaviour in this life. "Life is real, life is earnest, And the grave is not its goal", as Longfellow truly says. We must therefore earnestly search out Allah's Truth, encouraged by the fact that Allah's Truth is also, out of His unbounded mercy, searching us out and trying to reach us.

116. Therefore exalted be Allah, the King, the Reality: there is no god but He, the Lord of the Throne of Honour!

117. If anyone invokes, besides Allah, Any other god, he has no authority therefor; and his reckoning will be only with his Lord!(2951) and verily the Unbelievers will fail to win through!(2952)

2951 Not with any one else whatever, as Allah is the Eternal Reality. If men, out of the figments of their imagination, fancy other gods, they will be rudely undeceived. And Allah is Lord, *i.e.,* our Cherisher as well as our Creator. In spite of all our shortcomings and our rebellions, He will forgive us if we go to Him not on our merits but on His grace. (R).

2952 See the same word used in describing the contrast with the Believers, in the first verse of this Surah. Righteousness must win and all opposition to it must fail. Thus the circle of the argument is completed.

118. So say: "O my Lord! grant Thou forgiveness and mercy for Thou art the Best of those who show mercy!"



24. Al Nur (The Light)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A sura which We have sent down and(2953) which We have ordained in it have We sent down Clear Signs, in order that ye may receive admonition.

2953 It must not be thought that the checking of sex offences or of minor improprieties, that relate to sex or privacy, are matters that do not affect spiritual life in the highest degree. These matters are intimately connected with spiritual teaching such as Allah has sent down in this Surah. The emphasis is on "We": these things are not mere matters of convenience, but Allah has ordained them for our observance in life.

2. The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication,-(2954) flog each of them with a hundred stripes:(2955) Let not compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by Allah, if ye believe in Allah and the Last Day: and let a party of the Believers witness their punishment.(2956)

2954 *Zina* includes sexual intercourse between a man and a woman not married to each other. It therefore applies both to adultery (which implies that one or both of the parties are married to a person or persons other than the ones concerned) and to fornication, which, in its strict signification, implies that both parties are unmarried. The law of marriage and divorce is made easy in Islam, so that there may be less temptation for intercourse outside the well-defined bonds of marriage. This makes for greater self-respect for both man and woman. Other sex offences are also punishable, but this Section applies strictly to *Tina* as above defined.

2955 *Cf.* 4:15, n. 523 and 33:30.

2956 The punishment should be public, in order to be deterrent.

3. Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication marry and but a woman similarly guilty, or an Unbeliever: nor let any but such a man or an Unbeliever marry such a woman: to the Believers such a thing is forbidden.(2957)

2957 Islam commands sex purity, for men and for women, at all times—before marriage, during marriage, and after the dissolution of marriage. Those guilty of illicit practices are shut out of the marriage circle of chaste men and women.

4. And those who launch a charge against chaste women, and produce not four witnesses (to support their allegations),- flog them with eighty stripes; and reject their evidence(2958) ever after: for such men are wicked transgressors;-

2958 The most serious notice is taken of people who put forward slanders or scandalous suggestions about women without adequate evidence. If anything is said against a woman's chastity, it should be supported by evidence twice as strong as would ordinarily be required for business transactions, or even in murder cases. That is, four witnesses would be required instead of two. Failing such preponderating evidence, the slanderer should himself be treated as a wicked transgressor and punished with eighty stripes. Not only would he be subjected to this disgraceful form of punishment, but he would be deprived of the citizen's right

of giving evidence in all matters all his life, unless he repents and reforms, in which case he can be readmitted to be a competent witness. (The verse lays down the punishment for slandering *"chaste women"*, which by consensus of opinion also covers slandering chaste men. Chaste women have been specially mentioned, according to Commentators, because slandering them is more abhorrent. (Eds.) (*Cf.* n. 662).

5. Unless they repent thereafter(2959) and mend (their conduct); for Allah is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful.

2959 The punishment of stripes is inflicted in any case for unsupported slander. But the deprivation of the civic right of giving evidence can be cancelled by the man's subsequent conduct, if he repents, shows that he is sorry for what he did, and that he would not in future support by his statement anything for which he has not the fullest evidence. Secular courts do not enforce these principles, as their standards are lower than those which good Muslims set for themselves, but good Muslims must understand and act on the underlying principles, which protect the honour of womanhood. Abu Hanifah considers that neither the stripes nor the incompetence for giving future evidence is cancelled by repentance, but only the spiritual stigma of being "wicked transgressors". This of course is the more serious punishment, though it cannot be enforced in the Courts.

6. And for those who launch a charge against their spouses, and have (in support) no evidence but their own,-(2960) their solitary evidence (can be received) if they bear witness four times (with an oath) by Allah that they are solemnly telling the truth;

2960 The case of married persons is different from that of outsiders. If one of them accuses the other of unchastity, the accusation partly reflects on the accuser as well. Moreover, the link which unites married people even where differences supervene, is sure to act as a steadying influence against the concoction of false charges of unchastity particularly where divorce is allowed (as in Islam) for reasons other than unchastity. Suppose a husband catches a wife in adultery. In the nature of things four witnesses-or even one outside witness-would be impossible. Yet after such an experience it is against human nature that he can live a normal married life. The matter is then left to the honour of the two spouses. If the husband can solemnly swear four times to the fact, and in addition invoke a curse on himself if he lies, that is *prima facie* evidence of the wife's guilt. But if the wife swears similarly four times and similarly invokes a curse on herself, she is in law acquitted of the guilt. If she does not take this step, the charge is held proved and the punishment follows. In either case the marriage is dissolved, as it is against human nature that the parties can live together happily after such an incident. (*Cf.* nn. 523-526).

7. And the fifth (oath) (should be) that they solemnly invoke the curse of Allah on themselves if they tell a lie.

8. But it would avert the punishment from the wife, if she bears witness four times (with an oath) By Allah, that (her husband) is telling a lie;

9. And the fifth (oath) should be that she solemnly invokes the wrath of Allah on herself if (her accuser) is telling the truth.

10. If it were not for Allah.s grace and mercy on you, and that Allah is Oft- Returning, full of Wisdom,- (Ye would be ruined indeed).(2961)

2961 *Cf.* 24:11-14, and n. 2962, which illustrates the matter by a concrete instance.

11. Those who brought forward(2962) the lie are a body among yourselves: think it not to be an evil to you; On the contrary it is good(2963) for you: to every man among them (will come the punishment) of the sin that he earned, and to him(2964) who took on himself the lead among them, will be a penalty grievous.

2962 The particular incident here referred to occurred on the return from the expedition to Banu al Mustaliq, A.H. 5-6. When the march was ordered, 'A'ishah was not in her tent, having gone to search for a valuable necklace she had dropped. As her litter was veiled, it was not noticed that she was not in it, until the army reached the next halt. Meanwhile, finding the camp had gone, she sat down to rest, hoping that some one would come back to fetch her when her absence was noticed. It was night, and she fell asleep. Next morning she was found by Safwan, a Muhajir, who had been left behind in the camp expressly to pick up anything inadvertently left behind. He put her on his camel and brought her, leading the camel on foot. This gave occasion to enemies to raise a malicious scandal. The ringleader among them was the chief of the Madinah Hypocrites, 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, who is referred to in the last clause of this verse. He had other sins and enormities to his debit, and he was left to the spiritual punishment of an unrepentant sinner, for he died in that state. The minor tools were given the legal punishment of the law, and after penitence mended their lives. They made good.

2963 It is the worse for a scandal to be whispered about with bated breath, than that it should be brought into the light of day and disproved.

2964 The ringleader: see n. 2962 above.

12. Why did not the believers - men and women(2965) - when ye heard of the affair,- put the best construction on it in their own minds and say, "This (charge) is an obvious lie" ?

2965 Both men and women were involved in spreading the scandal. Their obvious duty was to put the best, not the worst, construction on the acts of one of the "mothers of the Believers".

13. Why did they not bring four witnesses to prove it?(2966) When they have not brought the witnesses, such men, in the sight of Allah, (stand forth) themselves as liars!

2966 If any persons took it seriously, it was their duty to search for and produce the evidence, in the absence of which they themselves became guilty of slander.

14. Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, in this world and the Hereafter, a grievous penalty would have seized you in that ye rushed glibly into this affair.(2967)

2967 *Cf.* 24:10 above. It was Allah's mercy that saved them from many evil consequences, both in this life and in the Hereafter—in this life, because the Prophet's wise measures nipped in the bud any incipient estrangements between those nearest and dearest to him, and from a spiritual aspect in that the minor agents in spreading the scandal repented and were forgiven. No doubts and divisions, no mutual distrust, were allowed to remain in their hearts after the whole matter had been cleared up.

15. Behold, ye received it on your tongues, and said out of your mouths things of which ye had no knowledge; and ye thought it to be a light matter, while it was most serious in the sight of Allah.(2968)

2968 There are three things here reprobated by way of spiritual teaching: (1) if others speak an evil word, that is no reason why you should allow it to defile your tongue; (2) if you get a thought or suspicion which is not based on your certain knowledge, do not give it currency by giving it expression; and (3) others may think it is a small matter to speak lightly of something which blasts a person's character or reputation: in the eyes of Allah it is a most serious matter in any case, but specially when it involves the honour and reputation of pious women.

16. And why did ye not, when ye heard it, say? - "It is not right of us to speak of this: Glory to Allah. this is a most serious slander!"(2969)

2969 The right course would have been to stop any further currency of false slanders by ignoring them and at least refusing to help in their circulation. The exclamation *"Subh'anaka"*, "Praise to Thee (O Allah)", or "Glory to Allah!" is an exclamation of surprise and disavowal as much as to say, "We do not believe it! And we shall have nothing to do with you, O false slanderers!"

17. Allah doth admonish you, that ye may never repeat such (conduct), if ye are (true) Believers.

18. And Allah makes the Signs plain to you: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

19. Those who love (to see) scandal published broadcast among the Believers, will have a grievous Penalty in this life and in the Hereafter: Allah knows, and ye know not.(2970)

2970 What mischiefs can be planned by Evil to delude simple folk who mean no harm in their own minds but who by thoughtlessness are deluded step by step to become the instruments of Evil, may not be known to the most instructed of men, but it is all known to Allah. Man should therefore always be on his guard against the traps of Evil, and it is only Allah's grace that can save him.

20. Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, and that Allah is full of kindness and mercy, (ye would be ruined indeed).(2971)

2971 Note the refrain that comes four times in this passage, "Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah. . ." Each time it has a different application. (1) In 24:10, it was in connection with the accusation of infidelity by one of the spouses against the other: they were both reminded of Allah's mercy and warned against suspicion and untruth. (2) In 24:14, the Believers were told to be wary of false rumours lest they should cause pain and division among themselves: it is Allah's grace that keeps them united. (3) Here is an admonition for the future: there may be conspiracies and snares laid by Evil against simple people: it is Allah's grace that protects them. (4) In 24:21, the general warning is directed to the observation of purity in act and in thought, concerning one's self and concerning others: it is only Allah's grace that can keep that purity spotless, for He hears prayers and knows of all the snares that are spread in the path of the good.

21. O ye who believe! follow not Satan´s footsteps: if any will follow the footsteps of Satan, he will (but) command what is shameful and wrong: and were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, not one of you would(2972) ever have been pure: but Allah doth purify whom He pleases:(2973) and Allah is One Who hears and knows (all things).

2972 See last note.

2973 Spotless purity in thought, word, and deed, includes the disposition to put the best construction on the motives of others, so that we ascribe no evil motive to the seeming indiscretions of virtuous people. Such a high standard can only come by the grace of Allah, Who hears all prayers and knows all the temptations to which human nature is subject. His Will and Plan make both for spiritual protection and spiritual peace, and we must place ourselves trustingly in His hands.

22. Let not those among you who are endued with grace and amplitude of means(2974) resolve by oath against helping their kinsmen, those in want, and those who have left their homes in Allah's cause: let them forgive and overlook, do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

2974 The immediate reference was to Abu Bakr, the father of 'A'ishah. He was blessed both with spiritual grace from Allah and with ample means, which he always used in the service of Islam and of Muslims. One of the slanderers of 'A'ishah turned out to be Mistah, a cousin of Abu Bakr, whom he had been in the habit of supporting. Naturally Abu Bakr wished to stop that aid, but according to the highest standards of Muslim ethics he was asked to forgive and forget, which he did, with the happiest results to the peace and unity of the Muslim community. But he general application holds good for all time. A generous patron should not, in personal anger, withdraw his support even for serious faults if the delinquent repents and mends his ways. If Allah forgives us, who are we to refuse forgiveness to our fellows?

23. Those who slander chaste women, indiscreet but believing,(2975) are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter: for them is a grievous Penalty,-

2975 Good women are sometimes indiscreet because they think of no evil. But even such innocent indiscretion lands them, and those who hold them dear, in difficulties. Such was the case with 'A'ishah, who was in extreme pain and anguish for a whole month because of the slanders spread about her. Her husband and her father were also placed in a most awkward predicament, considering their position and the great work in which they were engaged. But unprincipled people, who start false slanders, and their unthinking tools who help in spreading such slanders, are guilty of the gravest spiritual offence, and their worst punishment is the deprivation of Allah's grace, which is the meaning of a state of Curse.

24. On the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them(2976) as to their actions.

2976 Our own limbs and faculties are the strongest witness against us if we misuse them for evil deeds instead of using them for the good deeds for which they were given to us *(Cf.* 75-18).

25. On that Day Allah will pay them back (all) their just dues, and they will realise that Allah is the (very) Truth, that makes all things manifest.(2977)

2977 All that we thought of hiding will be clear as day before Allah's Judgement Seat, because He is the very essence of Truth and Reality. He is the true Light (24:35), of which all physical light is merely a type or reflection.

26. Women impure are for men impure, and men impure for women impure and women of purity are for men of purity, and men of purity are for women of purity: these are not affected by what people say:(2978) for them there is forgiveness, and a provision honourable.(2979)

2978 The pure consort with the pure, and the impure with the impure. If the impure, out of the impurity of their thoughts, or imaginations, impute any evil to the pure, the pure are not affected by it, but they should avoid all occasions for random talk.

2979 *Forgiveness* for any indiscretion which they may have innocently committed, and spiritual provisions of protection against the assaults of Evil. It is also meant that the more evil ones attempt to defame or slander them, the more triumphantly will they be vindicated and provided with the physical and moral good which will advance their real life.

27. O ye who believe! enter not houses other than your own, until ye have asked permission and saluted those in them: that is best for you, in order that ye may heed (what is seemly).(2980)

2980 The conventions of propriety and privacy are essential to a refined life of goodness and purity. The English saying that an Englishman's home is his castle, suggests a certain amount of exclusiveness and defiance. The Muslim principle of asking respectful permission and exchanging salutations ensures privacy without exclusiveness, and friendliness without undue familiarity.

28. If ye find no one(2981) in the house, enter not until permission is given to you: if ye are asked to go back, go back: that makes for greater purity for yourselves: and Allah knows well all that ye do.

2981 That is, if no one replies: there may be people in the house not in a presentable state. Or, even if the house is empty, you have no right to enter it until you obtain the owner's permission, wherever he may be. The fact of your not receiving a reply does not entitle you to enter without permission. You should wait, or knock twice or three times, and withdraw in case no permission is received. If you are actually asked to withdraw, as the inmates are not in a condition to receive you, you should *a. fortiori withdraw,* either for a time, or altogether, as the inmates may wish you to do. Even if they are your friends, you have no right to take them by surprise or enter against their wishes. Your own purity of life and conduct as well as of motives is thus tested.

29. It is no fault on your part to enter houses not used for living in, which serve some (other) use for you:(2982) And Allah has knowledge of what ye reveal and what ye conceal.

2982 The rule about dwelling houses is strict, because privacy is precious, and essential to a refined, decent, and well-ordered life. Such a rule of course does not apply to houses used for other useful purposes, such as an inn or caravanserai, or a shop, or a warehouse. But even here, of course, implied permission from the owner is necessary as a matter of common-sense. The question in this passage is that of refined privacy, not that of rights of ownership.

30. Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard(2983) their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do.

2983 The rule of modesty applies to men as well as women. A brazen stare by a man at a woman (or even at a man) is a breach of refined manners. Where sex is concerned, modesty is not only "good form": it is not only to guard the weaker sex, but also to guard the spiritual good of the stronger sex.

31. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard(2984) their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments(2985) except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband´s fathers, their sons, their husbands´ sons, their brothers or their brothers´ sons, or their sisters´ sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments.(2986) And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards Allah, that ye may attain Bliss.(2987)

2984 The need for modesty is the same in both men and women. But on account of the differentiation of the sexes in nature, temperaments, and social life, a greater amount of privacy is required for women than for men, especially in the matter of dress and the uncovering of the bosom.

2985 *Zinah* means both natural beauty and artificial ornaments. I think both are implied here, but chiefly the former. The woman is asked not to make a display of her figure or appear in undress except to the following classes of people: (1) her husband, (2) her near relatives who would be living in the same house, and with whom a certain amount of *neglige* is permissible: (3) her women, *i.e.,* her maid-servants, who would be constantly in attendance on her: some Commentators include all believing women; it is not good form in a Muslim household for women to meet other women, except when they are properly dressed; (4) slaves, male and female, as they would be in constant attendance (but with the abolition of slavery this no longer applies); (5) old or infirm men-servants; and (6) infants or small children before they get a sense of sex. *Cf.* also 33:59.

2986 It is one of the tricks of showy or unchaste women to tinkle their ankle ornaments, to draw attention to themselves.

2987 While all these details of the purity and good form of domestic life are being brought to our attention, we are clearly reminded that the chief object we should hold in view is our spiritual welfare. All our brief life on this earth is a probation, and we must make our individual, domestic, and social life all contribute to our holiness, so that we can get the real success and bliss which is the aim of our spiritual endeavour. (R).

32. Marry those among you who are single,(2988) or the virtuous ones among yourselves, male or female: if they are in poverty, Allah will give them means out of His grace: for Allah encompasseth all,(2989) and he knoweth all things.

2988 The subject of sex ethics and manners brings us to the subject of marriage. "Single" *(ayama,* plural of *Ayyim)* here means any one not in the bond of wedlock, whether unmarried or lawfully divorced, or widowed. If we can, we must marry in our own circle, but if we have not the means, there is no harm if we choose from a lower circle, provided our choice is determined by virtue. Poverty in the other party does not matter if there is virtue and love. A happily married man has the best wealth in a virtuous wife, and his very happiness makes him a better potential earner of wealth. A slave becomes free by marriage.

2989 *Cf.* 10:57 Allah's mercy is for all: it is not confined to a class or grade of people.

33. Let those who find not the wherewithal for marriage keep themselves chaste, until Allah gives them means(2990) out of His grace. And if any of your slaves ask for a deed in writing (to enable them to earn their freedom for a certain sum), give them such a deed(2991) if ye know any good in them: yea, give them something yourselves out of the means which Allah has given to you. But force not your maids(2992) to prostitution when(2993) they desire chastity, in order that ye may make a gain in the goods of this life. But if anyone compels them, yet, after such compulsion, is Allah, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (to them).(2994)

2990 A Muslim marriage requires some sort of a dower for the wife. If the man cannot afford that, he must wait and keep himself chaste. It is no excuse for him to say that he must satisfy his natural cravings within or outside marriage. It must be within marriage.

2991 The law of slavery in the legal sense of the term is now obsolete. While it had any meaning, Islam made the slave's lot as easy as possible. A slave, male or female, could ask for conditional manumission by a written deed fixing the amount required for manumission and allowing the slave meanwhile to earn money by lawful means and perhaps marry and bring up a family. Such a deed was not to be refused if the request was genuine and the slave had character. Not only that, but the master is directed to help with money out of his own resources in order to enable the slave to earn his or her own liberty.

2992 Where slavery was legal, what is now called the "white slave traffic" was carried on by wicked people like 'Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, the Hypocrite leader at Madinah. This is absolutely condemned. While modern nations have abolished ordinary slavery, the "White Slave Traffic" is still a big social problem in individual States. Here it is absolutely condemned. No more despicable trade can be imagined. (R).

2993 I have translated "in" (literally, "if) by "when" because this is not a conditional clause but an explanatory clause, explaining the meaning of "force". "Forcing" a person necessarily means that it is against the wish or inclination of the person forced. Even if they were to give a formal consent, it is not valid because the persons concerned are in (legal, or now) economic slavery.

2994 The poor unfortunate girls, who are victims of such a nefarious trade, will yet find mercy from Allah, whose bounties extend to the lowest of His creatures.

34. We have already sent down to you verses making things clear, an illustration from (the story of) people who passed away before you, and an admonition for those who fear (Allah).(2995)

2995 This prepares the way for the magnificent Verse of Light that follows, and its sublime meaning. (R).

35. Allah is the Light(2996) of the heavens and the earth.(2997) The Parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass:(2998) the glass as it were a brilliant star:(2999) Lit from a blessed Tree,(3000) an Olive, neither of the east nor of the West,(3001) whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it:(3002) Light upon Light! Allah doth guide whom He will to His Light:(3003) Allah doth set forth Parables for men: and Allah doth know all things.

2996 Embedded within certain directions concerning a refined domestic and social life, comes this glorious parable of Light, which contains layer upon layer of transcendental truth about spiritual mysteries. No notes can do adequate justice to its full meaning. Volumes have been written on this subject, the most notable being al Ghazali's *Mishkat al Anwar.* In these notes I propose to explain the simplest meaning of this passage. (R).

2997 The physical light is but a reflection of the true Light in the world of Reality, and that true Light is Allah. We can only think of Allah in terms of our phenomenal experience, and in the phenomenal world, light is the purest thing we know, but physical light has drawbacks incidental to its physical nature: *e.g.,* (1) it is dependent on some source external to itself: (2) it is a passing phenomenon: if we take it to be a form of motion or energy it is unstable, like all physical phenomena; (3) it is dependent on space and time; its speed is 186,000 miles per second, and there are stars whose light takes thousands (or millions or billions) of years before it reaches the earth. The perfect Light of Allah is free from any such defects. (R).

2998 The first three points in the Parable centre round the symbols of the Niche, the Lamp, and the Glass. (1) The Niche *(Mishkah)* is the little shallow recess in the wall of an Eastern house, fairly high from the ground, in which a light (before the days of electricity) was usually placed. Its height enabled it to diffuse the light in the room and minimised the shadows. The background of the wall and the sides of the niche helped throw the light well into the room, and if the wall was white-washed, it also acted as a reflector: the opening in front made the way for the light. So with the spiritual Light: it is placed high above worldly things: it has a niche or habitation of its own, in Revelation and other Signs of Allah; its access to men is by a special Way, open to all, yet closed to those who refuse its rays. (2) The Lamp is the core of the spiritual Truth, which is the real illumination; the Niche is nothing without it; the Niche is actually made for it. (3) The Glass is the transparent medium through which the Light passes. On the one hand, it protects the light from moths and other forms of low life (lower motives in man) and from gusts of wind (passions), and on the other, it transmits the light through a medium

which is made up of and akin to the grosser substances of the earth (such as sand, soda, potash, etc.), so arranged as to admit the subtle to the gross by its transparency. So the spiritual Truth has to be filtered through human language or human intelligence to make it intelligible to mankind.

2999 The glass by itself does not shine. But when the light comes into it, it shines like a brilliant star. So men of God, who preach Allah's Truth, are themselves illuminated by Allah's Light and become like illuminating media through which that Light spreads and permeates human life.

3000 The olive tree is not a very impressive tree in its outward appearance. Its leaves have a dull greenish-brown colour, and in size it is inconspicuous. But its oil is used in sacred ceremonies and forms a wholesome ingredient of food. The fruit has a specially fine flavour. *Cf. n.* 2880 to 23:20. For the illuminating quality of its oil, see n. 3002 below.

3001 This mystic Olive is not localised. It is neither of the East nor the West. It is universal, for such is Allah's Light. As applied to the olive, there is also a more literal meaning, which can be allegorised in a different way. An olive tree with an eastern aspect gets only the rays of the morning sun; one with a western aspect, only the rays of the western sun. In the northern hemisphere the south aspect will give the sun's rays a great part of the day, while a north aspect will shut them out altogether, and *vice versa* in the southern hemisphere. But a tree in the open plain or on a hill will get perpetual sunshine by day: it will be more mature, and the fruit and oil will be of superior quality. So Allah's light is not localised or immature: it is perfect and universal.

3002 Pure olive oil is beautiful in colour, consistency, and illuminating power. The world has tried all kinds of illuminants, and for economic reasons or convenience, one replaces another. But for coolness, comfort to the eyes, and steadiness, vegetable oils are superior to electricity, mineral oils, and animal oils. And among vegetable oils, olive oil takes a high place and deserves its sacred associations. Its purity is almost like light itself: you may suppose it to be almost light before it is lit. So with spiritual Truth: it illuminates the mind and understanding imperceptibly, almost before the human mind and heart have been consciously touched by it

3003 Glorious, illimitable Light, which cannot be described or measured. And there are grades and grades of it, passing transcendently into regions of spiritual height, which man's imagination can scarcely conceive of. The topmost pinnacle is the true prototypal Light, the real Light, of which all others were reflections; the Light of Allah. Hence the saying of the Holy Prophet about Allah's "Seventy thousand veils of Light".

36. (Lit is such a Light)(3004) in houses, which Allah hath permitted to be raised(3005) to honour; for the celebration, in them, of His name: In them is He glorified in the mornings and in the evenings, (again and again),-(3006)

3004 The punctuation of the Arabic text makes it necessary to carry back the adverbial clause, "in houses", to something in the last verse, say "Lit from a blessed Tree"-the intervening clause being treated as parenthetical.

3005 That is, in all places of pure worship; but some Commentators understand special Mosques, such as the Ka'bah in Makkah, or the Mosques in MadTnah or Jerusalem ; for these are specially held in honour.

3006 *In the evenings:* the Arabic word is *Asa I,* a plural of a plural, to imply emphasis: I have rendered that shade of meaning by adding the words "again and again".

37. By men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance(3007) of Allah, nor from regular Prayer, nor from the practice of regular Charity: Their (only) fear is for the Day when hearts and eyes will be transformed(3008) (in a world wholly new),-

3007 "Remembrance of Allah" is wider than Prayer: it includes silent contemplation, and active service of Allah and His creatures. The regular Prayers and regular Charity are the social acts performed through the organised community.

3008 Some renderings suggest the effects of terror on the Day of Judgement. But here we are considering the case of the righteous, whose "fear" of Allah is akin to love and reverence and who (as the next verse shows) hope for the best reward from Allah. But the world they will meet will be a wholly changed one.

38. That Allah may reward them according to the best(3009) of their deeds, and add even more for them out of His Grace: for Allah doth provide for those whom He will, without measure.

3009 The best of the righteous do not deserve the reward that they get: all their faults are forgiven, and only their best actions are considered in the reward that they get. Nay, more! Out of the unbounded Grace of Allah even more is added to them. For in giving rewards, Allah's bounty is boundless.

39. But the Unbelievers,- their deeds are like a mirage(3010) in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing:(3011) But he finds Allah(3012) (ever) with him, and Allah will pay him his account: and Allah is swift in taking account.

3010 We have had various metaphors to give us an idea of the beneficent Light of Allah in the spiritual world. Now we have contrasted metaphors to enable us to see those who deny or refuse that Light, and are overwhelmed in utter darkness. The Light (of Allah) is an absolute Reality, and is mentioned first, and the souls that follow that Light are a reflected reality and are mentioned after the Light. On the other hand the Darkness is not a reality in itself, but a negation of reality; the reflected existences that refuse the Light are mentioned, and then their state, which is Unreality. Two metaphors are given: a mirage, in this verse, and the depths of darkness in the sea, in the next.

3011 The mirage, of which I have seen several instances in the Arabian deserts and in Egypt , is a strange phenomenon of illusion. It is a trick of our vision. In the language of our Parable, it rejects the Light which shows us the Truth, and deceives us with Falsehood. A lonely traveller in a desert, nearly dying of thirst, sees a broad sheet of water. He goes in that direction, lured on and on, but finds nothing at all. He dies in protracted agony.

3012 The rebel against Allah finds himself like the man deluded by a mirage. The Truth which he rejected is always with him. The mirage which he accepted leads to his destruction.

40. Or (the Unbelievers´ state) is like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by (dark) clouds:(3013) depths of darkness, one(3014) above another: if a man stretches out his hands, he can hardly see it! for any to whom Allah giveth not light, there is no light!(3015)

3013 What a graphic picture of darkness is the depths of the Ocean, wave upon wave, and on top of all, dense dark clouds! There is so little light even in ordinary depths of the Ocean that fishes which live there lose their eyes as useless organs. For lines *4-5,* I am indebted to Gardiner's Translation of Ghazari's *Mishkat*

3014 A contrast to "Light upon Light" in 24:35 above.

3015 The true source of Light in the world of Reality is Allah, and anyone who cuts himself off from the Light is in utter darkness indeed, for it is the negation of the only true Light, and not merely relative darkness, like that which we see, say, in the shadows of moonlight.

41. Seest thou not that it is Allah Whose praises all beings in the heavens and on earth(3016) do celebrate, and the birds (of the air) with wings(3017) outspread? Each one knows its own (mode of) prayer and praise. And Allah knows well all that they do.

3016 *Cf.* 21:19-20.

3017 All denizens of the heavens, such as angels, all denizens of the earth (including the waters) such as man, animals, insects, fishes, etc., and all denizens of the air, such as birds, celebrate the praises of Allah. Each has his own mode of prayer and praise. It is not necessarily with words, for language (as we know it) is peculiar to man. But actions and other modes of self-expression recognise and declare the Glory of Allah.

42. Yea, to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; and to Allah is the final goal (of all).(3018)

3018 From Him we are; to Him we belong; and to Him we shall return. Not only we, but all Creation, proclaims this in the whole world.

43. Seest thou not that Allah makes the clouds move gently, then joins them together, then makes them into a heap? - then wilt thou see rain issue forth(3019) from their midst. And He sends down from the sky mountain masses (of clouds) wherein is hail: He strikes therewith whom He pleases and He turns it away from whom He pleases, the vivid flash of His lightning well-nigh blinds the sight.

3019 Artists, or lovers of nature, or observers of clouds will appreciate this description of cloud effects— thin clouds floating about in fantastic shapes, joining together and taking body and substance, then emerging as heavy clouds heaped up, which condense and pour forth their rain. Then the heavy dark clouds in the upper regions, that bring hail—how distinct and yet how similar! They are truly like mountain masses! And when the hailstones fall, how local their area! It hits some localities and leaves free others almost interlaced! And the lightning—how blinding flashes come from thunderous clouds! In this Book of Nature can we not see the hand of the powerful and beneficent Allah?

44. It is Allah Who alternates the Night and the Day:(3020) verily in these things is an instructive example for those who have vision!

3020 His power, wisdom, and goodness are shown no less in the regular phenomena of nature like the succession of Day and Night, than in the seasonal or seeming irregular movements of clouds and rain and hail and lightning. Those who have the spiritual vision can read this Book of Allah with delight and instruction.

45. And Allah has created every animal from water:(3021) of them there are some that creep on their bellies; some that walk on two legs; and some that walk on four.(3022) Allah creates what He wills;(3023) for verily Allah has power over all things.

3021 *Cf.* 21:30 n. 2691. Protoplasm is the basis of all living matter, and "the vital power of protoplasm seems to depend on the constant presence of water" (Lowsons' Text-book of Botany, Indian Edition. London 1922, p. 23). Textbooks of Zoology are also clear on the point. For example, see T.J. Parker and W. A. Haswell, Textbook of Zoology, London , 1910, vol I. p. 15: "Living protoplasm always contains a large amount of water.

3022 The creeping things include worms and lowly forms of animal life as well as reptiles (like snakes), centipedes, spiders, and insects. Where these have legs they are small, and the description of creeping or crawling is more applicable to them than that of walking. Fishes and sea-animals generally cannot be said to walk: their swimming is like "creeping on their bellies". Two-legged animals include birds and man. Most of the mammals walk on four legs. This includes the whole of the animal world

3023 In Allah's Will and Plan, the variety of forms and habits among animals is adapted to their various modes of life and stages of biological evolution.

46. We have indeed sent down signs that make things manifest: and Allah guides whom He wills to a way that is straight.

47. They(3024) say, "We believe in Allah and in the messenger, and we obey": but even after that, some of them turn away: they are not (really) Believers.

3024 The Hypocrites, far from profiting from Allah's Light and Revelation, or declaring their open hostility, play fast and loose according to their selfish worldly aims.

48. When they are summoned to Allah and His messenger, in order that He may judge between them, behold some of them decline (to come).

49. But if the right is(3025) on their side, they come to him with all submission.

3025 The Hypocrites only wanted to go to the judge who they thought was likely to give judgement in their favour. If their case was incontestable, and justice was on their side, they readily came to the Prophet, knowing that he was just and would judge in their favour, even against his own adherents. But if they had done wrong, an impartial judge was not to their taste. They would rather go to some one who would tip the balance in their favour! This form of selfishness and iniquity was not confined to the Hypocrites of Madinah. It is common in all ages, and should be suppressed.

50. Is it that there is a disease in their hearts? or do they doubt, or are they in fear, that Allah and His Messenger will deal unjustly with them? Nay, it is they themselves who do wrong.(3026)

3026 The real fact is that their conscience smites them. They know their own iniquity, and do not wish to go before a just judge who would be open to no influence and would be sure to give a righteous decree.

51. The answer of the Believers, when summoned to Allah and His Messenger, in order that He may judge between them, is no other than this: they say, "We hear and we obey":(3027) it is such as these that will attain felicity.(3028)

3027 *Cf.* 2:285. Contrast with it the attitude of the Unbelievers or Hypocrites, who say aloud, "we hear", but intend in their hearts to disobey (2:93).

3028 True happiness, whether here or in the Hereafter, is not to be attained by fraud or duplicity: it is the privilege of those who listen attentively to good counsel and carry it out in their lives.

52. It is such as obey Allah and His Messenger, and fear Allah and do right, that will win (in the end),

53. They swear their strongest oaths by Allah that, if only thou wouldst command them, they would leave (their homes).(3029) Say: "Swear ye not; Obedience is (more) reasonable; verily, Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do."

3029 Some people, especially hypocrites, give hyperbolic assurances, as did the Madinah Hypocrites to the Holy Prophet, that they would do any bidding, even to the forsaking of their hearths and homes. To this they are ready to swear their strongest oaths, which mean nothing. They are asked to spare their oaths, and quietly do at least such unheroic duties as they are asked to do in everyday life. Idle words are not of the least value. Allah will judge by your actions, and He knows all, whether it is open or secret.

54. Say: "Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger. but if ye turn away, he is only responsible for the duty placed on him and ye for that placed on you. If ye obey him, ye shall be on right guidance. The Messenger.s duty is only to preach the clear (Message).(3030)

3030 'If you disobey Allah's commands as explained by His Prophet, you are not going to be forced. The Prophet's mission is to train your will and explain clearly all the implications of your conduct. The responsibility for your conduct rests entirely on yourselves.

55. Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He(3031) will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion - the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear(3032) in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: ´They will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me. ´If any do reject Faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked.

3031 Three things are promised here, to those who have Faith and obey Allah's Law: (1) that they will inherit power and authority on the land, not for any selfish purposes of theirs by way of favouritism, but in order that they may maintain Allah's Law; (2) that the Religion of Right, which Allah has chosen for them, will be openly established, and will suppress all wrong and oppression; (3) that the righteous will live in peace and security, instead of having to suffer persecution, or leave their hearths and homes for the cause of Allah, or practise the rites of their Faith in secret.

3032 If this verse was revealed about the time of the Battle of the Ditch *(al Khandaq),* also called the Battle of the Confederates (*al Ahzab),* A.H. 4-5, we can imagine the comfort it gave to the Muslims who were besieged in Madinah by a force ten times their number. The Muslims then lived in a state of great suspense

and danger, and under arms for days on end. (See 33:9-20). The security and authority they were promised came to them subsequently in abundant measures.

56. So establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity; and obey the Messenger. that ye may receive mercy.

57. Never think thou that the Unbelievers are going to frustrate ((Allah)´s Plan) on earth: their abode is the Fire,- and it is indeed an evil refuge!

58. O ye who believe!(3033) Let those whom your right hands(3034) possess, and the (children) among you who have not come of age(3035) ask your permission (before they come to your presence), on three occasions: before morning prayer; the while ye doff your clothes for the noonday heat; and after the late-night prayer: these are your three times(3036) of undress: outside those times it is not wrong for you or for them to move about attending to each other: Thus does Allah make clear the Signs to you: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

3033 We now come to rule of decorum within the family circle in refined society. Servants and children have rather more freedom of access, as they come and go at all hours, and there is less ceremony with them. But even in their case there are limitations. During the night, before morning prayer, *i.e.,* before dawn, they must discreetly ask for permission before they enter, partly because they must not unnecessarily disturb people asleep, and partly because the people are then undressed. The same applies to the time for the midday siesta, and again to the time after night prayers, when people usually undress and turn in to sleep. For grown-ups the rule is stricter: they must ask permission to come in at all times (24:59).

3034 This would mean slaves in a regime of slavery. But the principle applies to all personal servants, who have to render personal service to their masters or mistresses by day and by night.

3035 I have translated "come of age" euphemistically for "attain the age of puberty".

3036 It is mark of refinement for ladies and gentlemen not to be slipshod or vulgarly familiar, in dress, manners, or speech; and Islam aims at making every Muslim man or woman, however humble in station, a refined gentleman or lady, so that he or she can climb the ladder of spiritual development with humble confidence in Allah, and with the cooperation of his brothers and sisters in Islam. The principles here laid down apply, if they are interpreted with due elasticity, even if social and domestic habits change, with changes in climate or in racial and personal habits. Punctilious self-respect and respect for others, in small things as well as great, are the keynotes in the simple rules of etiquette.

59. But when the children among you(3037) come of age, let them (also) ask for permission, as do those senior to them (in age):(3038) Thus does Allah make clear His Signs to you: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.(3039)

3037 *Children among you: i.e.,* in your house, not necessarily your own children. All in the house, including the stranger within your gate, must conform to these wholesome rules.

3038 *Those senior to them:* literally, those before them, *i.e..,* those who have already become grown-up before these children attain their age. It is suggested that each generation as it grows up should follow the wholesome tradition of its predecessors. While they were children, they behaved like children; when they grow up, they must behave like grown-ups.

3039 The refrain connects up this verse with the last verse, whose meaning is completed here. The slight variation *("His* Signs" here, against *"the* Signs" there) shows that this verse is more personal, as referring to children who have now become responsible men and women.

60. Such elderly women(3040) as are past the prospect of marriage,- there is no blame on them if they lay aside their (outer) garments, provided they make not a wanton display of their beauty: but it is best for them to be modest: and Allah is One Who sees and knows(3041) all things.

3040 For elderly women in the home the rules of dress and decorum are not so exacting as for younger women, but they are also enjoined to study modesty, both because it is good in itself, and as an example to the younger people.

3041 Another example of a refrain: see n. 3039 above. Verses 58 and 59 were closer connected: their refrain was practically identical. This verse, though ancillary, is less closely connected; its refrain comes in like a half note melody.

61. It is no fault in the blind nor in one born lame, nor in one afflicted with illness,(3042) nor in yourselves, that ye should eat in your own houses, or those of your fathers, or your mothers, or your brothers, or your sisters, or your father´s brothers or your father´s sisters, or your mohter´s brothers, or your mother´s sisters, or in houses of which the keys are in your possession, or in the house of a sincere friend of yours: there is no blame on you, whether ye eat in company or separately. But if ye enter houses, salute each other - a greeting of blessing and purity as from Allah,(3043) thus does Allah make clear the signs to you: that ye may understand.(3044)

3042 There were various Arab superstitions and fancies which are combated and rejected here. (1) The blind, or the halt, or those afflicted with serious disease were supposed to be objects of divine displeasure, and as such not fit to be associated with us in meals in our houses: we are not to entertain such a thought, as we are not judges of the causes of people's misfortunes, which deserve our sympathy and kindness. (2) It was considered unbecoming to take meals in the houses of near relatives: this taboo is not approved. (3) A simple superstition about houses in our possession but not in our actual occupation is disapproved. (4) If people think they should not fall under obligation to casual friends, that does not apply to a sincere friend, in whose company a meal is not to be rejected, but welcomed. (5) If people make a superstition either that they should always eat separately, or that they must always eat in company, as some people weary of their own company think, either of them is wrong. Man is free and should regulate his life according to needs and circumstances. (R).

3043 The shades of meaning in *Salam* are explained in n. 2512 to 19:62. Here, we were first told that we might accept hospitality and good fellowship in each odier's houses. Now we are told what spirit should animate us in doing so. It should not be a spirit only of self-satisfaction in a worldly sense. It should rather be a spirit of good will in the highest spiritual sense of the term-purity of motives and purity of life, as in the sight of Allah. *Cf.* Dante in the *Paradiso* (iii. 85): "In His will is our Peace."

3044 See notes 3039 and 3041 above. The refrain comes again, in a different form, closing the argument from a different point of view.

62. Only those are believers, who believe in Allah and His Messenger. when they are with him on a matter requiring collective action,(3045) they do not depart until they have asked for his leave; those who ask for thy leave are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger. so when they ask for thy leave, for some business of theirs, give leave to those of them whom thou wilt,(3046) and ask Allah for their forgiveness:(3047) for Allah is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful.

3045 *Matter requiring collective action:* anything that affects the Community as a whole: *Jumu'ah and 'Id* prayers are periodical occasions of this kind, but what is meant here is, I think, joint consultations with a view to joint undertakings, such as Jihad, or some kind of organisation in peace.

3046 That is, those to whom, in the exercise of your impartial discretion, you think it expedient to give leave. "Will", unless the context shows otherwise, means "right will", not a will without any definite principle behind it.

3047 In important matters of general consultation, even though leave of absence is given on sufficient excuse, it implies some defect in duty on the part of the person to whom the leave is given, and therefore the need of forgiveness from Him to Whom we owe duty is a perfect measure.

63. Deem not the summons of the Messenger among yourselves like the summons of one(3048) of you to another: Allah doth know those of you who slip away under shelter of some excuse: then let those beware who withstand the Messenger.s order, lest some trial

befall them,(3049) or a grievous penalty be inflicted on them.

3048 Three significations are possible. One is that adopted in the Translation, which agrees with the view of most Commentators. Another would be: 'Do not think that the prayer of the Prophet of Allah is like your ordinary requests to another: the Prophet's prayer will be about serious matters and will be accepted by Allah.' A third interpretation would be: 'Do not address the Prophet familiarly as you would address one another: use proper terms of respect for him.'

3049 The "trial" is understood to be some misfortune in this life, and the "grievous Penalty" to be the punishment in the Hereafter.

64. Be quite sure that to Allah doth belong whatever is in the heavens and on earth. Well doth He know what ye are intent upon:(3050) and one day they will be brought back to Him, and He will tell them the truth of what they did:(3051) for Allah doth know all things.

3050 The condition or position you are in, the motives which actuate you, and the ends you have in view.

3051 Things misunderstood or maligned, falsely praised or held in honour, or fraudulently shown to be good when they are evil-everything will be revealed in its true light on the Day of Final Judgement.



25. Al Furqan (The Criterion)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Blessed(3052) is He who sent down the Criterion(3053) to His servant, that it(3054) may be an admonition to all creatures;-

3052 *Tabaraka:* the root meaning is "increase" or "abundance." Here that aspect of Allah's dealing with His creatures is emphasised, which shows his abundant goodness to all His creatures, in that He sent the Revelation of His Will, not only in the unlimited Book of Nature, but in a definite Book in human language, which gives clear directions and admonitions to all. The English word "blessed" hardly conveys that meaning, but I can find no other without departing far from established usage. To emphasise the meaning I have explained, I have translated "Blessed is . ..", but "Blessed be . .." is also admissible, as it brings out another shade of meaning, that we praise and bless His Holy Name.

3053 That by which we can judge clearly between right and wrong. Here the reference is to the Qur'an, which has already been symbolised by Light This symbol is continued here, and many contrasts are shown, in the midst of which we can distinguish between the true and false by Allah's Light, especially the contrast between righteousness and sin.

3054 The pronoun in *yakuna* may refer to *Furqan* (the Criterion) or the *'Abd* (the Holy Prophet). In either case the ultimate meaning is the same. The Qur'an is the standing Criterion for judgement between right and wrong.

2. He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: no son has He begotten, nor has He a partner in His dominion: it is He who created all things, and ordered them in due proportions.(3055)

3055 The majesty of Allah and His independence of all wants or help are mentioned, to show how exceedingly great is His goodness in revealing His Will to us.

3. Yet have they taken,(3056) besides him, gods that can create nothing but are themselves created; that have no control of hurt or good to themselves; nor can they control death nor life nor resurrection.

3056 This is the first great distinction taught by the Criterion: to know the attribute of the True God, as against the false fancies of men. (R).

4. But the misbelievers say: "Naught is this but a lie(3057) which he has forged, and others have helped him at it." In truth it is they who have put forward an iniquity and a falsehood.

3057 *Ifk,* which I have translated as a "lie" may be distinguished from *zur* at the end of this verse, translated "falsehood". The "lie" which the enemies attributed to the Holy Prophet of Allah was supposed to be something which did not exist in reality, but was invented by him with the aid of other people: the implication was that (1) the Revelation was not a revelation but a forgery, and that (2) the things revealed *e.g.,* the news of the Hereafter, the Resurrection, the Judgement, the Bliss of the Righteous and the sufferings of the Evil, were fanciful and had no basis in fact. Delusion is also suggested. The reply is that, so far from that being the case, the facts were true and the charges were false (zur)-the falsehood being due to the habits of iniquity for which the Misbelievers' whole mental and spiritual attitude was responsible. (R).

5. And they say: "Tales of the ancients, which he has caused to be written: and they are dictated before him morning and evening."(3058)

3058 In their misguided arrogance they say: 'We have heard such things before: they are pretty tales which have come down from ancient times; they are good for amusement, but who takes them seriously? When the beauty and power of the Revelation are pointed Out, and its miracle as coming from an unlearned man, they again hint at other men who wrote them, though they could not produce any one who could write anything like it.

6. Say: "The (Qur´an) was sent down by Him who knows the mystery (that is) in the heavens(3059) and the earth: verily He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

3059 The answer is that the Qur'an teaches spiritual knowledge of what is ordinarily hidden from men's sight, and such knowledge can only come from Allah, to Whom alone is known the Mystery of the whole Creation. In spite of man's sin and shortcomings, He forgives, and He sends His most precious gift, *i.e.,* the revelation of His Will.

7. And they say: "What sort of a messenger is this, who eats food, and walks through the streets? Why has not an angel been sent down to him to give admonition with him?(3060)

3060 This is another objection: 'He is only a man like us: why is not an angel sent down, if not by himself, at least with him?' The answer is: angels would be of no use to men as Messengers, as they and men would not understand each other, and if angels came, it might cause more confusion and wonder than understanding in men's minds. *Cf.* 21:7-8, 17:94-95. The office of an angel is different. A teacher for mankind is one who shares their nature, mingles in their life, is acquainted with their doings, and sympathises with their joys and sorrows.

8. "Or (Why) has not a treasure been bestowed on him, or why has he (not) a garden for enjoyment?"(3061) The wicked say: "Ye follow none other than a man bewitched."(3062)

3061 Literally, 'that he may eat out of it'. As shown in n. 776 to 5:66, *akala* (to eat) has a comprehensive meaning, implying enjoyment of all kinds, physical, social, mental and moral, and spiritual. Here the garden itself stands for a type of the amenities of life: its fruits would be available for eating, its coolness for rest and refreshment, its waters and its landscape for aesthetic delight.

3062 *Cf.* 17:47. This speech, of the wicked or the ungodly, is meant to be even more bitter than that of the Misbelievers. It makes out the Teacher to be a demented fool.

9. See what kinds of comparisons they make for thee! But they have gone astray, and never a way will they be able to find!(3063)

3063 The charges the enemies made against the Messenger of Allah recoiled on those who made them. The Messenger was vindicated, and went from strength to strength, for Allah's Truth will always prevail. The men who perversely leave the way of truth, righteousness, and sincerity, have not only missed *the* Way, but on account of their perversity they will never be able to find any way by which they can get back to Truth.

10. Blessed is He Who,(3064) if that were His will, could give thee better (things) than those,- Gardens beneath which(3065) rivers flow; and He could give thee palaces (secure to dwell in).

3064 *Cf.* above, 25:1 The reminiscent phrase shows that the first argument, about the Revelation and Prophethood, is completed, and we now pass on to the contrast, the fate of the rejecters of both.

3065 This phrase is usually symbolical of the Bliss in the Hereafter. If it were Allah's Plan, He could give his Messengers complete felicity and power in this life also. Instead of being persecuted, mocked, driven out of their homes, and having to exert their utmost powers of body, mind, and character to plant the flag of Truth in an unbelieving world, they could have lived in ease and security. But that would not have given the real lessons they came to teach struggling humanity by their example.

11. Nay they deny the hour (of the judgment to come):(3066) but We have prepared a blazing fire for such as deny the hour:

3066 Denying the Hour of J udgement means denying the power of Justice and Truth to triumph; it means asserting the dominion of Evil. But the Reality itself will punish them, as shown in the following verses.

12. When it sees them from a place fAr off, they will hear its fury and its ranging sigh.(3067)

3067 For *zafir,* a deep emission of breath or a sigh, see n. 1607 to 11:106. Here the Fire is personified. It is raging with hunger and fury, and as soon as it sees them from ever so far, it emits a sigh of desire. Till then they had not realised their full danger. Now, just as their heart begins to tremble with terror, they are bound together-like with like-and cast into the roaring flames!

13. And when they are cast, bound together into a constricted place therein, they will pLead for destruction there and then!(3068)

3068 Anything—total annihilation—would be better than the anguish they will suffer. But no annihilation will be granted to them. One destruction will not be enough to wipe out the intensity of their anguish. They will have to ask for many destructions, but they will not get them!

14. "This day plead not for a single destruction: plead for destruction oft- repeated!"

15. Say: "Is that best, or the eternal garden, promised(3069) to the righteous? for them, that is a reward as well as a goal (of attainment).(3070)

3069 Shifting the scene back to this life, they may fairly be asked: "Here is the result of the two courses of conduct: which do you prefer?"

3070 To the righteous, the final Bliss will in one sense be a reward. But the word "reward" does not truly represent facts, for two reasons: (1) the Bliss will be greater than they deserved; and (2) righteousness is its own reward. The best way of expressing the result would be to say that their highest Wish will now have been attained; the goal will have been reached; they will be in Allah's Presence. That is salvation in the highest.

16. "For them there will be therein all that they wish for: they will dwell (there) for aye: A promise to be prayed for from thy Lord."(3071)

3071 That is the sort of thing-the Goal of Allah's Presence-to be prayed for from Allah, and not ephemeral things, even though they may be good. And that is the sort of thing that Allah has promised and undertaken to give.

17. The day He will gather them together as well as those whom they worship besides Allah, He will ask:(3072) "Was it ye who let these My servants astray, or did they stray from the Path themselves?"

3072 The question is as in a Court of Justice, to convince those who stand arraigned.

18. They will say: "Glory to Thee! not meet was it for us that we should take for protectors others besides Thee:(3073) But Thou didst bestow, on them and their fathers, good things (in life), until they forgot the Message: for they were a people (worthless and) lost."

3073 The creatures of Allah who were worshipped will prove that they never asked for worship: on the contrary they themselves worshipped Allah and sought the protection of Allah and of none but Allah, *Cf.* 46:5-6. They will go further and show that the false worshippers added ingratitude to their other sins: for Allah bestowed abundance on them, and they blasphemed against Allah. They were indeed "worthless and lost", for the word *bur* bears both significations.

19. ((Allah) will say): "Now have they proved you liars in what ye say: so ye cannot avert (your penalty)(3074) nor (get) help." And whoever among you does wrong, him shall We cause to taste of a grievous Penalty.

3074 The argument is as in a court of justice. If the false worshippers plead that they were misled by those whom they falsely worshipped, the latter will be confronted with them and will prove that plea to be false. No help can be got from them, and the penalty cannot then be averted. After all these things are thus explained in detail beforehand, all ungodly men should repent and turn to Allah. False worship is here identified with sin, for sin is disobedience to Allah, and arises from a wrong appreciation of Allah's attributes and His goodness to His creatures. The sinful man refuses, in his conduct, to serve Allah: he serves other things than Allah. (R)

20. And the messengers whom We sent before thee were all (men) who ate food and walked through the streets:(3075) We have made some of you as a trial for others:(3076) will ye have patience? for Allah is One Who sees (all things).

3075 *Cf.* above, 25:7, and also 26:92-94.

3076 In Allah's universal Plan, each unit or thing serves a purpose. If some are rich, the poor should not envy them: it may be that the rich man's proximity is itself a trial of their value. If some are poor, the righteous rich should not despise or neglect them; it may be that their coming within their sight is a trial for the real feeling of charity or brotherly love in the rich. If *A* is bad-tempered or persecutes or ill-uses *B,* it may be an opportunity for *B* to show his patience or humility or his faith in the ultimate prevalence of justice and truth. Whatever our experiences with other human beings may be, we must make them subserve the ends of our spiritual improvement and perhaps theirs too.

21. Such as fear not the meeting with Us(3077) (for Judgment) say: "Why are not the angels sent down to us, or (why) do we not see(3078) our Lord?" Indeed they have an arrogant conceit of themselves, and mighty is the insolence of their impiety!

3077 The blasphemers who have given up all Faith and laugh at the Hereafter: nothing is sacred to them: their arrogance and insolence are beyond all bounds.

3078 *Cf.* 2:55. The Israelites in the time of Moses demanded to see Allah. But they were dazed with thunder and lightning even as they looked on. Indeed death would have been their fate, had it not been for the mercy of Allah.

22. The Day they see the angels,- no joy will there be to the sinners that Day: The (angels) will say: "There is a barrier forbidden (to you) altogether!"(3079)

3079 They will not be allowed to enjoy any of the felicity or peace which will be the normal state of the new world of Reality. Their own past will stand as a barrier to shut them off.

23. And We shall turn to whatever deeds they did (in this life), and We shall make such deeds as floating dust scattered about.(3080)

3080 The false hopes they built on in this life, and the deeds they did under the shadow of such false hopes will be dissipated as if they were dust flying about in the wind. They will have no value whatever (j. 2:167).

24. The Companions of the Garden will be well, that Day, in their abode, and have the fairest of places for repose.(3081)

3081 The barrier which will shut out the evil ones will not exist for the righteous, who will have an abode of bliss and repose, for they will be in the Garden of Allah 's Goad Pleasure.

25. The Day the heaven shall be rent asunder with clouds,(3082) and angels shall be sent down, descending (in ranks),-

3082 It will be a new world, and the symbolism to describe it must necessarily draw upon our present experience of the finest things in nature. The sky, which now appears remote and unpeopled will be rent asunder. There will appear clouds of glor-angels and spiritual Lights of all grades and ranks-and the true majesty and goodness of Allah will be visible as it should be in reality, and as it is not now, on account of "our muddy vesture of decay". (R).

26. That Day, the dominion as of right and truth, shall be (wholly) for (Allah)(3083) Most Merciful: it will be a Day of dire difficulty for the Misbelievers.

3083 See last note.

27. The Day that the wrong-doer will bite at his hands, he will say, "Oh! would that I had taken a (straight) path with the Messenger!(3084)

3084 The words are general, and for us the interest is in a general sense. A man who actually receives the Truth and is on the right path is all the more culpable if he is diverted from that path by the machinations of a worldly friend. The particular person whom some Commentators mention in this connection was one 'Uqbah who received the light of Islam, but was misled afterwards by a worldly friend into apostasy and blasphemy. He came to an evil end afterwards.

28. "Ah! woe is me! Would that I had never taken such a one for a friend!

29. "He did lead me astray from the Message (of Allah. after it had come to me! Ah! the Evil One is but a traitor to man!"(3085)

3085 The seductive wiles of the Evil One are merely meant for snares. There is fraud and treachery in them. The deceived ones are left in the lurch after the way of escape is made impossible for them

30. Then the Messenger will say: "O my Lord! Truly my people took this Qur´an for just foolish nonsense."(3086)

3086 *"My people"* are of course the unbelieving Quraysh. They treated the Qur'an as foolish nonsense *i.e.,* something to be discarded. But they were only a handful of people whose vested interests were touched by the beneficent reforms initiated by Islam. They soon passed away, and all Arabic-speaking or Arabic-understanding people have considered the Qur'an as a treasury of Truths expressed in the most beautiful possible language, with a meaning that grows deeper with research. (R).

31. Thus have We made for every prophet an enemy among the sinners: but enough is thy Lord to guide and to help.(3087)

3087 It is the nature of sin to be hostile to truth and righteousness, but such hostility will not harm the righteous and need cause no misgiving because Allah will guide and help those who work in His cause. And what could be better or more effective than His guidance and help?

32. Those who reject Faith say: "Why is not the Qur´an revealed to him all at once? Thus (is it revealed), that We may strengthen thy heart(3088) thereby, and We have rehearsed it to thee in slow, well-arranged stages, gradually.

3088 Three reasons are given for the gradual revelation of the Qur'an. (1) *"To strengthen thy heart":* the tremendous task of winning the Arab nation, and, through them, the whole world, to Islam, required superhuman patience, constancy, and firmness, and these qualities were strengthened by the gradual promulgation of solutions to each difficulty as it arose. (2) *"Slow, well-arranged stages":* though the stages were gradual, as the occasion demanded from time to time, in the course of twenty-three years, the whole emerged, when completed, as a well-arranged scheme of spiritual instruction, as we have seen in following the arrangement of the Surahs. (3) *Questions put and answers given:* see next note.

33. And no question do they bring to thee but We reveal to thee the truth and the best explanation (thereof).(3089)

3089 Divine knowledge is a fathomless ocean. But glimpses of it can be obtained by any individuals sincerely searching for the Truth. Their progress will be in grades. If they ask questions, and answers are then furnished to them, they are more likely to apprehend the Truth, as they have already explored the part of the territory in which they are interested. In the same way, when concrete questions arise by the logic of events, and they are answered not only for the occasion, but from a general stand-point, the teaching has a far greater chance of penetrating the human intelligence and taking shape in practical conduct. And this is the usual way of instruction in the Qur'an.

34. Those who will be gathered to Hell (prone) on their faces,-(3090) they will be in an evil plight, and, as to Path, most astray.(3091)

3090 That is, in ignominy.

3091 This verse may be compared and contrasted with 25:24 above. Here the argument is rounded off about the distinction between the Good and Evil in their final Destiny. The Good are to have "the fairest of places for repose", and in contrast, the Evil are, "as to Path, most astray". They have no repose, and their wanderings lead nowhere.

35. (Before this,) We sent Moses The Book, and appointed his brother Aaron with him as Minister;(3092)

3092 *Cf.* 20:29, and the whole passage there, which is merely referred to here, to show how previous Prophets were treated, but how they stuck fast to the Criterion given, to distinguish between Good and Evil.

36. And We command: "Go ye both, to the people who have rejected our Signs:" And those (people) We destroyed with utter destruction.

37. And the people of Noah,- when they rejected the messengers, We drowned them, and We made them as a Sign for mankind;(3093) and We have prepared for (all) wrong-doers a grievous Penalty;-

3093 The stories of Noah, of the prophets of 'Ad and Thamud (and of other prophets), in the reactions of their communities to their teaching are told in 26:105-159, below. Here they are just mentioned to illustrate how little respect past ages had for their prophets and teachers of Truth. But Allah's Truth did not suffer: it was the blind rejecters of spiritual Truth who were wiped out.

38. As also ´Ad and Thamud, and the Companions(3094) of the Rass, and many a generation between them.

3094 Commentators are not clear as to who the "Companions of the *Ross"* were. The root meaning of *"rass"* is an old well or shallow water-pit. Another root connects it with the burial of the dead. But it is probably the name of a town or place. The "Companions of the *Rass"* may well have been the people of Shu'ayb, as they are here mentioned with 'Ad,Thamud, and Lot 's people, and the people of Shu'ayb are mentioned in a similar connection in 26:176-190 and in 11:84-95. Shu'ayb was the prophet of the Madyan people in the northwest of Arabia , where many old wells are found. There is however, an oasis town *al Rass in* the district of Qasim in Middle Najd, about thirty-five miles southwest of the town of 'Unayzah, reputed to be the central point of the Arabian Peninsula, and situated midway between Makkah and Basrah. See Doughty's *Arabia Deserta,* thin paper one-volume edition, London 1926, II. 435 and Map. Lat. 26°N., and Long. 43°E.

39. To each one We set forth Parables and examples; and each one We broke to utter annihilation (for their sins).

40. And the (Unbelievers) must indeed have passed by the town on which was rained(3095) a shower of evil: did they not then see it (with their own eyes)? But they fear not the Resurrection.

3095 This refers to Lot's story and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah , the wicked cities of the plain near the Dead Sea , by a shower of brimstone. The site lies on the highway between Arabia and Syria . *Cf.* 15:74, 76, and n. 1998.

41. When they see thee, they treat thee no otherwise than in mockery: "Is this the one whom Allah has sent as a messenger?"

42. "He indeed would well-nigh have misled us from our gods, had it not been that we were constant to them!" - Soon will they know, when they see the Penalty, who it is that is most misled in Path!(3096)

3096 *"Path" (Sabil)* is almost equivalent here to conduct or way of life.

43. Seest thou such a one as taketh for his god his own passion (or impulse)? Couldst thou be a disposer of affairs for him?(3097)

3097 The man who worships his own passions or impulses or desires is the most hopeless to teach or lead or guide. If it were anything else the matter with him, the Teacher could argue with him. But Reason cannot prevail over blind passion. It is vain to hope that such a man could be led, until his mad desires are killed. No one could undertake any responsibility for him, for he obeys no law and follows no advice. He is worse than brute beasts, which may not understand, but at least follow the wholesome instincts implanted in them by Allah. The lawless man has killed his instincts and is unwilling to submit to guidance.

44. Or thinkest thou that most of them listen or understand? They are only like cattle;- nay, they are worse astray in Path.

45. Hast thou not turned(3098) thy vision to thy Lord?- How He doth prolong(3099) the shadow! If He willed, He could make it stationary! then do We make the sun its guide;(3100)

3098 We saw in 24:35 that Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. We have now, another sublime passage, in which we are asked to contemplate the Glory of Allah by a parable of the subtle play of Light and Shade in Allah's creation. (R).

3099 In our artificial life and surroundings we fail to see some of the finest mysteries of Light and Shade. We praise, and rightly so, the wonderful colours of sunset. We see, particularly in climates more northerly than that of India , the subtle play of Light and Shade in the twilights succeeding sunsets. If we were as assiduous in seeing sunrises and the play of Light and Shade preceding them, we should see phenomena even more impressive, as the early morning seems to us more holy than any other time in the twenty-four hours of the sun's daily journey. There is the first false dawn, with its curious uncertain light and the curious long uncertain shadows which it casts. Then there are the streaks of black in the East, succeeded by the true dawn, with its delicate tones of colours, and light and shade. The light of this true or false Dawn is not given by the direct rays of the sun. In a sense it is not light, but the shadows or reflections of light. And they gradually merge into actual sunrise, with its more substantial or more defined shadows, which we can definitely connect with the sun.

3100 The morning shadows are long but more definite, and their length and direction are seen to be guided by the sun. But they change insensibly every second or fraction of a second.

46. Then We draw it in(3101) towards Ourselves,- a contraction by easy stages.(3102)

3101 As the sun rises higher and higher, the shadows contract. In regions where the sun actually gets to the zenith at noon , there is no shadow left at that time. Where does it go? It was but a shadow cast by a substance and it gets absorbed by the substance which produced it. (R).

3102 Let us now reverently turn our vision (as far as we are able) to the symbolic meaning. Allah is the Light. All things in creation-whether concrete or abstract-are but shadows, depending on His Light. All shadows are not equal. He gives length or size of substance to such as He pleases. And some shadows almost become reflected lights, like the light of the false or the true Dawn. Such are holy men, in all kinds of gradations. The shadows are constantly in a state of flux; so are all things in Creation, all things we see or covet in this life. Allah, if He wills, can give some of them greater fixity or comparative stability. (R).

47. And He it is Who makes the Night as a Robe for you, and Sleep as Repose, and makes the Day (as it were) a Resurrection.(3103)

3103 Here the symbolism presents a fresh point of view. It is still a contrast between Light and Shade; but the shade of Night is as a Robe to cover and screen us and give us Repose from activity; and the Light of Day is for striving, work, activity. Or again, the Night is like Death, our temporary Death before Judgement, the time during which our senses are sealed in Sleep; and the Day is like the renewal of Life at the Resurrection.

48. And He it is Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before(3104) His mercy, and We send down pure water from the sky,-(3105)

3104 *Cf.* 7:57 and 27:63. The Winds are heralds of Joy, ushering in Rain, which is one form of Allah's Mercy. Again, the symbolism presents a fresh point of view. Heat (which is connected with light) sets up currents in the atmosphere, besides sucking up moisture from the seas, and distributing it by means of Winds over wide surfaces of the earth. In the physical world we know the beneficent action of heat on life, and by contrast, we also know how intolerable high temperatures may become, and how the cloud-bearing Winds come as welcome heralds of rain. (R).

3105 Rain water (in pure air) is not only pure water distilled in air and sky, but it is the best purifying and sanitating agent on the largest scale known to us.

49. That with it We may give life to a dead land, and slake the thirst of things We have created,-(3106) cattle and men in great numbers.

3106 The whole cycle of water-sea, clouds, rain or hail or snow, rivers, and sea again-is a remarkable illustration of the processes of nature making Allah's providence visible to us. The salts of the sea sanitate and purify all the filth that pours into it. Water action, in the form of rain, frost, glaciers, rivers, lakes, etc., is responsible for the building up and configuration of the crust of the earth, and is the chief agent in physical geography. A parched desert quickly comes to life under the action of water. All drinking water, whether derived from rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, springs, wells, or waterworks of any kind, are ultimately traceable to rain. The connection of life with water is intimate. The physical basis of life itself, protoplasm, is, in great part, water: see 25:54 below.

50. And We have distributed the (water) amongst them, in order(3107) that they may celebrate (our) praises, but(3108) most men are averse (to aught) but (rank) ingratitude.

3107 The water is distributed all over the world, in order that all life may receive its support, according to its needs. In 25:48-50, we have the argument of contrasts stated in another way. Water is life, and is made available to sustain life all over the world: this is a physical fact which all can see. But water is also the symbol of spiritual life, whose sustaining principle is the Will of Allah as made known to us through Revelation. It sometimes comes to us in our inward or spiritual storms. Many violent unsettlements of the spirit are but heralds of the refreshing showers of spiritual understanding mat come in their wake. They purify our souls, and produce spiritual Life even where there was a parched spiritual desert before. They continue to sustain us in our normal spiritual Life out of the reservoirs of Allah's Revelation, which are open to all, and well-distributed in time and space. The universality of distribution is again referred to in the following verse.

3108 In contrast to Allah's abounding Mercy is man's base ingratitude: another symbolic contrast between Light and Darkness, or Water and Drought

51. Had it been Our Will, We could have sent a warner to every centre of population.(3109)

3109 Allah's Message has been distributed to all nations. If it had been necessary, a Prophet could have been sent to every town and village. But Allah's Plan is different. He has sent His Light to every heart, through His Signs in man's conscience, in Nature, and in Revelation.

52. Therefore listen not to the Unbelievers, but strive against them with the utmost strenuousness, with the (Qur´an).(3110)

3110 The distribution of Allah's Signs being universal, the Prophet of Allah pays no heed to carping critics who reject Faith. He wages the biggest Jihad of all, with the weapon of Allah's Revelation. (R).

53. It is He Who has let free the two bodies of flowing water:(3111) One palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter; yet has He made a barrier between them, a partition that is forbidden to be passed.(3112)

3111 *Maraja:* literally, let free or loose cattle for grazing. *Bahrayn:* two seas, or two bodies of flowing water: for *bakris* applied both to the salt sea and to rivers. In the world taken as a whole, there are two bodies of water, *viz.,* (1) the great salt Ocean, and (2) the bodies of sweet water fed by rain, whether they are rivers, lakes, or underground springs: their source in rain makes them one, and their drainage, whether above ground or underground, eventually to the Ocean, also makes them one. They are free to mingle, and in a sense they do mingle, for there is a regular watercycle: see n. 3106 above: and the rivers flow constantly to the sea, and tidal rivers get sea water for several miles up their estuaries at high tide. Yet in spite of all this, the laws of gravitation are like a barrier or partition set by Allah, by which the two bodies of water as a whole are always kept apart and distinct. In the case of rivers carrying large quantities of water to the sea, like the Mississippi or the Yangtse-Kiang, the river water with its silt remains distinct from sea water for a long distance out to sea. But the wonderful Sign is that the two bodies of water, though they pass through each other, remain distinct bodies, with their distinct functions *(Cf.* 27:61 and 35:12).

3112 In Allah's overall scheme of things, bodies of salt and sweet water, which are adjoining and yet separate, have significant functions. Weaving a harmonious fabric out of these different fibres shows both Allah's power and wisdom. Incidentally, this verse points to a fact which has only recently been discovered by science. This fact relates to the oceans of the world: they meet and yet each remains separate for Allah has placed "a barrier, a partition" between them. (Eds.) (*Cf.* 23:100).

54. It is He Who has created man from water:(3113) then has He established relationships of lineage(3114) and marriage: for thy Lord has power (over all things).

3113 The basis of all living matter in the physical world, protoplasm, is water: *Cf.* 24:45 and 21:30 , and notes thereon.

3114 Water is a fluid, unstable thing: yet from it arises the highest form of life known to us in this world-man. And man has not only the functions and characteristics of the noblest animals, but his abstract relationships are also typical of his highest nature. He can trace lineage and pedigree, and thus remember and commemorate a long line of ancestors, to whom he is bound by ties of piety, which no mere animal can do. Further, there is the mystic union in marriage: it is not only like the physical union of animals, but it gives rise to relationships arising out of the sexes of individuals who were not otherwise related to each other. These are physical and social facts. But behind them, again, is the symbolic lesson of spiritual contrasts: as there is a long way to go between water and man, so there is a long way to go between an ordinary man and him who is lifted up to divine Light. As opposite sexes, though different in function, are one and contribute to each other's happiness, so persons of diverse talents may unite in the spiritual world for their own highest good and in the service of Allah.

55. Yet do they worship, besides Allah, things that can neither profit them nor harm them: and the Misbeliever is a helper (of Evil), against his own Lord!(3115)

3115 Here is the highest contrast of all—material things which are inert, and Allah, Whose goodness and power are supreme; Faith and Unfaith, meriting glad tidings and admonition; the selfish man who is self-centered, and the man of God, who works for others without reward.

56. But thee We only sent to give glad tidings and admonition.

57. Say: "No reward do I ask of you for it but this: that each one who will may take a (straight) Path to his Lord."

58. And put thy trust in Him Who lives and dies not; and celebrate his praise; and enough is He to be acquainted with the faults of His servants;-(3116)

3116 Allah knows our faults better than we or anyone else. It is no use hiding anything from Him. We must put our trust completely in Him. His care is for all, and He is Allah Most Gracious.

59. He Who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between, in six days,(3117) and is firmly established on the Throne (of authority):(3118) Allah Most Gracious: ask thou, then, about Him of any acquainted (with such things).(3119)

3117 *Cf.* 7:54 and n. 1031.

3118 Seen. 1386 to 10:3.

3119 The argument is about the question, "in whom shall we put our trust?" Worldly men put their trust in worldly things: the righteous man only in Allah. The true distinction will be quite clear from a ray of divine knowledge. If you do not see it all clearly, ask of those who possess such knowledge.

60. When it is said to them, "Adore ye ((Allah)) Most Gracious!", they say, "And what is ((Allah)) Most Gracious? Shall we adore that which thou commandest us?" And it increases their flight (from the Truth).(3120)

3120 Those who have no spiritual Light cannot understand this precept about putting all our trust in Allah. It seems to them foolish. They have no faith, or but a superficial faith. They may possibly pronounce the name of Allah on their lips, but they cannot understand the full significance of His tide of *Rahman* (Most Gracious). Perhaps they are afraid on account of their sins; perhaps they do not see how unbounded is the mercy of Allah. Such men are contrasted against the true servants of Allah, who are described below in 25:63-75.

61. Blessed is He Who made constellations in the skies, and placed therein a Lamp(3121) and a Moon giving light;

3121 The glorious Lamp of the skies is the Sun; and next to him is the Moon, which gives borrowed light. The Constellations of course, include the Signs of the Zodiac, which mark the path of the planets in the heavens *(Cf.* 15:16).

62. And it is He Who made the Night and the Day to follow each other: for such as have the will(3122) to celebrate His praises or to show their gratitude.

3122 The scenes of the phenomenal world are Signs of the Self-Revelation of Allah, for those who understand and who have the will to merge their wills with His. This they do (1) by praising Him, which means understanding something of His nature, and (2) by gratitude to Him, which means carrying out His Will, and doing good to their fellow creatures. These two attitudes of mind and heart give rise to various consequences in their lives, which are detailed in the following verse.

63. And the servants of ((Allah)) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant(3123) address them, they say, "Peace!";

3123 *Ignorant:* in a spiritual sense. *Address :* in the aggressive sense. Their humility is shown in two ways: (1) to those in real search of knowledge, they give such knowledge as they have and as the recipients can assimilate; (2) to those who merely dispute, they do not speak harshly, but say "Peace!", as much as to say, "May it be well with you, may you repent and be better"; or "May Allah give me peace from such wrangling"; or "Peace, and Good-bye: let me leave you!".

64. Those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord prostrate and standing;(3124)

3124 Humble prayer brings them nearer to Allah.

65. Those who say, "Our Lord! avert from us the Wrath of Hell, for its Wrath is indeed an affliction grievous,-(3125)

3125 This is a prayer of humility: such a person relies, not on any good works which he may have done, but on the Grace and Mercy of Allah: and he shows a lively sense of the Day of Judgement, when every action will weigh for or against a soul.

66. "Evil indeed is it as an abode, and as a place to rest in";(3126)

3126 The misery which results from sin is not only grievous to live in ("an abode") but also grievous "to rest in" or "to stand in", if it be only for a short time.

67. Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes);(3127)

3127 In ordinary spending, this is a wise rule. But even in charity, in which we give of our best, it is not expected that we should be extravagant, *i.e.,* that we should either do it for show (to impress other people), or do it thoughtlessly, which would be the case if we "rob Peter to pay Paul". We should certainly not be miserly, but we should remember everyone's rights, including our own, and strike a perfectly just balance between them.

68. Those who invoke not, with Allah, any other god, nor slay such life as Allah has made sacred except for just cause, nor commit(3128) fornication; - and any that does this (not only) meets punishment.

3128 Here three things are expressly condemned: (1) false worship, which is a crime against Allah; (2) the taking of life, which is a crime against our fellow creatures; and (3) fornication, which is a crime against our self-respect, against ourselves. Every crime is against Allah, His creatures, and ourselves, but some may be viewed more in relation to one than to another. The prohibition against taking life is qualified: "except for just cause": *e.g.,* in judicial punishment for murder, or in self-preservation, which may include not only self-defense in the legal sense, but also the clearing out of pests, and the provision of meat under conditions of *Halal:* see n. 698 to 5:5. After this comes a long parenthesis, which ends with verse 71, below.

69. (But) the Penalty on the Day of Judgment will be doubled to him, and he will dwell therein in ignominy,-(3129)

3129 The three crimes just mentioned are specially detestable and infamous, and as ignominy will be added to other punishments, the penalty will be double that of ordinary punishment (*Cf.* 7:38 , 11:20 , and 33:68).

70. Unless he repents, believes, and works righteous deeds, for Allah will change the evil of such persons into good, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful,(3130)

3130 But even in the case of great crimes, if there is true repentance as tested by a changed life in conduct, Allah's Mercy is available, and it will transform the repentant's nature from evil to good *(Cf.* 64:9).

71. And whoever repents and does good has truly turned to Allah with an (acceptable) conversion;-

72. Those who witness no falsehood,(3131) and, if they pass by futility,(3132) they pass by it with honourable (avoidance);

3131 *Witness no falsehood* has two significations, both implied in this passage: (1) those who give no evidence that is false; and (2) those who do not assist in anything which implies fraud or falsehood.

3132 There is not only condemnation of positive falsehood or of being mixed up with things implying falsehood, but futilities-vain random talk, unedifying jokes, useless show, etc.-are all condemned. If a good man finds himself in such an affair, he must withdraw from it in an honourable, dignified way, not in a fussy arrogant way.

73. Those who, when they are admonished with the Signs of their Lord, droop not down(3133) at them as if they were deaf or blind;

3133 *Kharra* may mean: to fall down, to snore, to droop down as if the person were bored or inattentive, or did not wish to see or hear or pay attention.

74. And those who pray, "Our Lord! Grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes,(3134) and give us (the grace) to lead the righteous."(3135)

3134 We must also pray for the maintenance of Allah's I,aw after us, through our wives and descendants: in our eyes they should not be mere accidents or play things, but a real comfort and fulfilment of our spiritual longings. Perhaps, through them, as well as through ourselves, we may, by Allah's grace, be able to give a lead for truth and righteousness.

3135 Let us recapitulate the virtues of the servants of Allah: (1) they are humble and forbearing to those below them in spiritual worth: (2) they are constantly, by adoration, in touch with Allah; (3) they always remember the Judgement in the Hereafter; (4) they are moderate in all things; (5) they avoid treason to Allah, to their fellow creatures, and to themselves; (6) they give a wide berth not only to falsehood but to futility; (7) they pay attention, both in mind and manner, to the Signs of their Lord; (8) their ambition is to bring up their families in righteousness and to lead in all good. A fine code of individual and social ethics, a ladder of spiritual development, open to all.

75. Those are the ones who will be rewarded with the highest place in heaven, because of their patient constancy: therein shall they be met with salutations and peace,

76. Dwelling therein;- how beautiful an abode and place of rest!

77. Say (to the Rejecters): "My Lord is not uneasy because of you if ye call not on Him:(3136) But ye have indeed rejected (Him), and soon will come the inevitable (punishment)!"

3136 Let not the wicked think that it causes Allah any annoyance or uneasiness if they do not serve or worship Him. He is high above all needs. But He turns in His Mercy to all who call on Him. For those who arrogantly reject Him, the evil consequences of their rejection are inevitable, and must soon come to pass. (R).

26. Al Shu'ara (The Poets)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Ta. Sin. Mim.(3137)

3137 This is a combination of three Abbreviated Letters, as to which, generally, see Appendix I, printed at the end of S. 2- This particular combination occurs here and at the head of S. 28, while the intervening Surah 27 has it in the syncopated form *Ta ' Sin.* None of the explanatory conjectures which 1 have seen carries conviction for me. If the letters stand for *Tur Sinin* (Mount Sinai) and *Musa* (Moses), whose story fills a large part of this Surah, why is the letter *Mi m* omitted in S. 27. where the same meaning would apply? There is, however, one fact to which I should like to draw attention. There are eleven sections in this Surah, and eight of them end with the word *Rahim* (with the final *Mim).* The three exceptions are sections 2 and 3, and section 11. But sections 2 and 3 are part of the story of Moses, which is completed in section 4, and that ends with *"Rahim",* The main argument in section 11 ends at verse 217, which ends with *Rahim.* We can say that the whole Surah is based on a refrain in the word *"Rahim".* Whether this has any bearing on our present enquiry I cannot say. My own position is that where we have material, we should pursue our researches, but we should never be dogmatic in such matters, as some Mysteries can never be solved by mere research.

2. These are verses of the Book that makes (things) clear.(3138)

3138 *Cf.* 5:15 , and n. 716. The comparison of Allah's revelations with Light is continued.

3. It may be thou frettest thy soul with grief, that they(3139) do not become Believers.

3139 "They" are the Pagans of Makkah. From a human point of view it was a great disappointment to Allah's Messenger in the middle period of his Makkan ministry that the Makkans could not be brought to believe in the Truth.

4. If (such) were Our Will,(3140) We could send down to them from the sky a Sign, to which they would bend their necks in humility.

3140 If it had been Allah's Will and Plan to force people's will, He could quite easily have forced the Makkans. But His Will and Plan work differently. His revelation is meant to train man's own will so that it conforms to Allah's beneficent purpose.

5. But there comes not to them a newly-revealed Message from ((Allah)) Most Gracious, but they turn away therefrom.

6. They have indeed rejected (the Message): so they will know soon (enough) the truth of what they mocked at!(3141)

3141 They may laugh at Allah's Message of righteousness, but they will soon see the power of Truth and realise the real significance of the movement which they opposed. Where were the Pagans of Makkah after Badr, and still more, after the bloodless surrender of Makkah? The meaning may be applied universally throughout history.

7. Do they not look at the earth,- how many noble things of all kinds We have produced therein?(3142)

3142 If evil has a little run in this life, let them not run away with the notion that the world is for evil. They have only to look around at the physical and moral world around them, and they would be undeceived. But they are blind and without the Faith (the Light) which would open their eyes.

8. Verily, in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe.

9. And verily, thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might,(3143) Most Merciful.

3143 One Who is able to carry out all His Will and Plans. See n. 2818 to 22:40.

10. Behold, thy Lord called(3144) Moses: "Go to the people of iniquity,-

3144 The part of the story of Moses told here is how Moses felt diffident about undertaking his commission; how Allah reassured him; how he went to Pharaoh with "the Signs"; how Pharaoh and his people rejected him; how their blasphemy recoiled on themselves, but the cause of Allah triumphed; in other words, the point here is the reaction of a wicked people to the Light that was held up to them, considered in its relation to the mind of Allah's Messenger.

11. "The people of the Pharaoh: will they not fear Allah."

12. He said: "O my Lord! I do fear that they will charge me with falsehood:

13. "My breast will be straitened.(3145) And my speech may not go (smoothly): so send unto Aaron.

3145 As we should say in English, "My heart would fail me, and my tongue cleave to my mouth." Moses had an impediment of speech, and his mission was risky: see next note. But Allah's Plan works in wondrous ways. Aaron was given to assist him in his mission, and Moses's shortcomings were transformed by Allah's grace into power, so that he became the most powerful leader of Israel .

14. "And (further), they have a charge of crime against me;(3146) and I fear they may slay me."

3146 Moses was brought up in the palace of Pharaoh , as narrated in his personal story in 20:39 -40 and n. 2563. When he was grown-up he saw an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, and as the Israelites were being generally oppressed by the Egyptians, Moses's anger was roused, and he slew the Egyptian. He then fled to the Midianite country in the Sinai peninsula , where he received the divine commission. But the charge of slaying the Egyptian was hanging against him. He was also apparently irascible. But Allah's grace cured his temper and he became wise; his impediment in speech, for he stood up boldly to speak to Pharaoh; and his fear, for he dared the Egyptians with Allah's Signs, and they were afraid of him.

15. Allah said: "By no means! proceed then, both of you, with Our Signs; We are with you, and will listen (to your call).

16. "So go forth, both of you, to Pharaoh, and say: ´We have been sent by the Lord and Cherisher of the worlds;

17. "´Send thou with us the Children of Israel.´"

18. (Pharaoh) said: "Did we not(3147) cherish thee as a child among us, and didst thou not stay in our midst many years of thy life?

3147 There is a little play of wit here on the part of Pharaoh. When Moses speaks of the "Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds", Pharaoh says: "Who cherished you? Did we not bring you up as a child? Did you not grow up among us?" By implication Pharaoh suggests that he is the cherisher of Moses, and in any case Pharaoh laid claim to godhead himself.

19. "And thou didst a deed of thine which (thou knowest)(3148) thou didst, and thou art an ungrateful (wretch)!"

3148 Further, Pharaoh reminds Moses of his having slain the Egyptian, and taunts him: "You are not only a murderer: you are an ungrateful wretch" (using *kafir* again in a double sense) "to have killed one of the race that brought you up!"

20. Moses said: "I did it then, when I was in error.(3149)

3149 What is Moses's reply? He is no longer afraid. He tells the whole truth, extenuating nothing in his own favour. "Yes I did it: but I did it under an error." There are three implications in this: "(1) 1 was wrong in doing it in a temper and in being hasty: (2) I was wrong in taking the law into my own hands, but I repented and asked for Allah's pardon (28:15-16): (3) that was a time when I was under your influence, but since then I am a changed man, as Allah has called me."

21. "So I fled from you (all) when I feared you;(3150) but my Lord has (since) invested me with judgment (and wisdom) and appointed me as one of the messengers.

3150 He accounts for all his movements, much more than Pharaoh had asked for. He has nothing to hide. At that time, he was under the influence of fear, and he had fled from him. Now he is serving Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. He has no fear: he is a messenger.

22. "And this is the favour (3151)with which thou dost reproach me,- that thou hast enslaved the Children of Israel!"

3151 Pharaoh had called Moses ungrateful and reproached him with all the favours which Moses had received from the Egyptians. "What favours?" he says: "Do you count it also as a favour to me that you have enslaved my brethren the Children of Israel?" Moses was now speaking as a Prophet of Allah, not as an individual. Any individual favours he may have received were blotted out by the oppression of his people. (R).

23. Pharaoh said: "And what is the ´Lord and Cherisher of the worlds´?"(3152)

3152 Moses having eliminated all personalities, the argument now comes up to the highest plane of all-the attributes of Allah and His mercies. Moses had put forward this before, as implied in verse 16 above, but Pharaoh had twisted it into personalities. Now we come back to the real issue. It may have been in the same sitting, or it may have been in a later sitting. (R).

24. (Moses) said: "The Lord and Cherisher of the heavens and the earth, and all between,- if ye want to be quite sure."

25. (Pharaoh) said to those around: "Did ye not listen (to what he says)?"(3153)

3153 Moses had stirred up the wrath of Pharaoh, both by putting forward the name of the One True God as against Pharaoh's pretended godhead, and by suggesting that any man of judgement would understand Allah's majesty. While Pharaoh turns to his people in indignation, Moses drives the nail in further: "He is the God of the heavens and the earth and all between: therefore He is also *your God,* and the God of your fathers from the beginning. Any other pretensions are false!"

26. (Moses) said: "Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers from the beginning!"

27. (Pharaoh) said: "Truly your messenger who has been sent to you is a veritable madman!"(3154)

3154 Pharaoh is further perturbed. In reply to Moses's statement that Allah, the One True God is also the God of the Egyptians and Pharaoh also, Pharaoh says sarcastically to his Court: "Look at this 'Messenger' of yours; he seems to be mad!" But Moses is not abashed. He boldly says what is the truth: "It is you who are mad! The God of Whom I preach is the Universal Lord-of the East and of the West. He reigns wherever you go!" (R).

28. (Moses) said: "Lord of the East and the West, and all between! if ye only had sense!"

29. (Pharaoh) said: "If thou dost put forward any god other than me, I will certainly put thee in prison!"(3155)

3155 Now we come to the crisis. Pharaoh threatens Moses with prison for treason. Moses remains calm and still argues: "What if I show you a miracle? Will it convince you that I am not mad, and that I have behind me the Lord of all the Worlds?"

30. (Moses) said: "Even if I showed you something clear (and) convincing?"(3156)

3156 The Egyptians were addicted to magic and sorcery, which was mostly false. It a true miracle were shown to them, would they believe? Perhaps they would see the hollowness of their own magic. In fact this actually happened with the Egyptian sorcerers themselves and perhaps with the commonalty. But Pharaoh and his Court were too arrogant, and battened too much on frauds to yield to Truth.

31. (Pharaoh) said: "Show it then, if thou tellest the truth!"

32. So (Moses) threw his rod, and behold, it was a serpent, plain (for all to see)!

33. And he drew out his hand, and behold, it was white to all beholders!(3157)

3157 *Cf.* 7:107-8. See the whole passage there, and the notes thereon.

34. (Pharaoh) said to the Chiefs(3158) around him: "This is indeed a sorcerer well- versed:

3158 In 7:109 it is the Chiefs who say this. The fact is that it was a general consultation, and this was the general feeling, expressed in words by each to the others.

35. "His plan is to get you out of your land by his sorcery; then what is it ye counsel?"

36. They said: "Keep him and his brother in suspense (for a while), and dispatch to the Cities heralds to collect-

37. "And bring up to thee all (our) sorcerers well-versed."

38. So the sorcerers were got together for the appointment of a day well-known,(3159)

3159 *A day well-known:* a solemn day of festival: see 20:59 . The object was to get together as large a concourse of people as possible. It was confidently expected that the Egyptian sorcerers with all their organisation would win with their tricks against these amateur Israelites, and so the State cult of the worship of Pharaoh would be fastened on the necks of the people more firmly than ever.

39. And the people were told: "Are ye (now) assembled?-

40. "That we may follow(3160) the sorcerers (in religion) if they win?"

3160 See the last note. The people are to come and witness the triumph of the State religion, so that they may become the more obedient to Pharaoh and more compliant with the demands of the priests. The State religion induded magic and the worship of Pharaoh.

41. So when the sorcerers arrived, they said to Pharaoh: "Of course - shall we have a (suitable) reward(3161) if we win?

3161 There was no such thing as pure loyalty to an exploiting ruler like this Pharaoh. The sorcerers, who were probably also priests, were venal, and they hoped to establish their own hold on both king and people by further enrichment of themselves and their order.

42. He said: "Yea, (and more),- for ye shall in that case be (raised to posts) nearest (to my person)."

43. Moses said to them: "Throw ye - that which ye are about to throw!"(3162)

3162 The euphemism implies a taunt, as if Moses had said: "I know about your tricks! You pretend to throw ropes and rods, and make people believe they are snakes. But now come on!"

44. So they threw their ropes and their rods, and said: "By the might of Pharaoh, it is we who will certainly win!"(3163)

3163 Though Pharaoh claimed to be a god, it is not likely that those nearest to him-his priests and sorcerers-believed such a thing! But it was a game of mutual pretence before the world. And so they appeal to his "divine" power.

45. Then Moses threw his rod, when, behold, it straightway swallows up all the falsehoods which they fake!(3164)

3164 The sorceres' ropes and rods seemed to have become serpents, but the rod of Moses was mightier than all of them and quickly swallowed them up. So truth is more powerful than tricks and will expose and destroy them.

46. Then did the sorcerers fall down, prostrate in adoration,

47. Saying: "We believe in the Lord of the Worlds,

48. "The Lord of Moses and Aaron."

49. Said (Pharaoh): "Believe ye in Him before I give you permission? surely he is your leader, who has taught you sorcery! but soon shall ye know!(3165) "Be sure I will cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will cause you all to die on the cross!"

3165 The sorcerers knew that they had met something very different from their tricks. Allah's spirit worked on them and they professed the True God. As they represented the intelligence of the community, it may be presumed that they carried the intelligence of Eygpt with them and perhaps some of the commonalty, who were impressed by the dramatic scene! Hence Pharaoh's anger, but it is the beginning of his decline!

50. They said: "No matter! for us, we shall but return to our Lord!

51. "Only, our desire is that our Lord will forgive us our faults, that we may become foremost among the believers!"(3166)

3166 This is the core of the lesson enforced on this passage. What was the reaction of the environment to the Light or Message of Allah? (1) It transformed Moses so that he became a fearless leader, one of the foremost in faith. (2) From men like Pharaoh and his corrupt court, it called forth obstinacy, spite, and all the tricks and snares of evil, but Evil was defeated on its own ground. (3) The very dupes of Evil were touched by the glorious Light of Allah, and they were ready to suffer tortures and death, their sole ambition (in their transformed state) being to be foremost in Faith!

52. By inspiration we told Moses: "Travel by night with my servants; for surely ye shall be pursued."(3167)

3167 The rest of the story-of the plagues of Egypt -is passed over as not germane to the present argument. We come now to the story of the Israelites leaving Egypt , pursued by Pharaoh. Here again there are three contrasts; (1) the blind arrogance of the Egyptians, against the development of Allah's Plan; (2) the Faith of Moses, against the fears of his people: and (3) the final deliverance of the seed of righteousness, against the destruction of the host of brute force *(Cf.* 2:38).

53. Then Pharaoh sent heralds to (all) the Cities,

54. (Saying): "These (Israelites) are but a small band,

55. "And they are raging furiously against us;

56. "But we are a multitude amply fore-warned."

57. So We expelled them(3168) from gardens, springs,

3168 The Children of Israel certainly inherited the gardens, springs, treasures, and honourable positions in Palestine after many years' wanderings in the wilderness. But when they were false to Allah, they lost them again, and another people (the Muslims) inherited them when they were true in Faith. These latter not only inherited Palestine but also Egypt , and the old Pharaonic power and institutions were lost forever, *Of such things:* literally, "of them". (R).

58. Treasures, and every kind of honourable position;

59. Thus it was, but We made the Children of Israel inheritors(3169) of such things.

3169 In deference to almost unanimous authority I have translated this passage (verses 58-60) as if it were a parenthetical statement of Allah's purpose. Personally I prefer another construction. According to that, verses 58-59 will be part of Pharaoh's proclamation: "We have dispossessed the Israelites from everything good in the land, and made them our slaves"; and verse 59 only will be parenthetical: "Poor ignorant men! You may oppress those who are helpless, but We *(i.e.* Allah) have declared that they shall inherit all these things", as they certainly did (for a time) in the Land of Promise , Palestine .

60. So they pursued them(3170) at sunrise.

3170 The story is here resumed after the parenthesis of verses 57-59.

61. And when the two bodies saw each other, the people of Moses said: "We are sure to be overtaken."

62. (Moses) said: "By no means! my Lord is with me! Soon will He guide me!"(3171)

3171 *Guide me: i.e.,* show me some way of escape from danger. This actually happened, for Pharaoh's host was drowned. The faith of Moses stands in strong contrast to the fears of his people.

63. Then We told Moses by inspiration: "Strike the sea with thy rod." So it divided, and each separate part became like the huge, firm mass of a mountain.

64. And We made the other party approach thither.(3172)

3172 The miracle was twofold: (1) Moses with his people passed safely through the sea; and (2) Pharaoh and his great host were drowned in the sea.

65. We delivered Moses and all who were with him;

66. But We drowned the others.

67. Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe.(3173)

3173 As it was then, so it is now. In spite of the obvious Signs of Allah, people who are blind in their obstinate resistance to Truth accomplish their own destruction, while humble, persecuted men of Faith are transformed by the Light of Allah, and obtain salvation.

68. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.(3174)

3174 Nothing that the powers of Evil can do, will ever defeat the merciful Purpose of Allah. Evil, in resisting good, will effect its own destruction.

69. And rehearse to them (something of) Abraham´s story.(3175)

3175 For the argument of this Surah the incidents in Abraham's life are not relevant and are not mentioned. What is mentioned is: (1) the steps by which he taught about the sin of false worship, in the form of a Dialogue; (2) the aims of a righteous man not only for his individual life, but for his ancestors and posterity, in the form of a Prayer; and (3) a picture of the Future Judgement, in the form of a vision. (1) is covered by verses 70-82; (2) by 83-86; and (3) by 88-102.

70. Behold, he said to his father and his people: "What worship ye?"

71. They said: "We worship idols, and we remain constantly(3176) in attendance on them."

3176 They want to show their true and assiduous devotion. But Abraham goes at once to the heart of the matter by asking: "To whom is your devotion paid? Is the object worthy of it?"

72. He said: "Do they listen to you when ye call (on them), or do you good or harm?"

73. Or do you good or harm?"

74. They said: "Nay, but we found our fathers doing thus (what we do)."

75. He said: "Do ye then see whom ye have been worshipping,-

76. "Ye and your fathers before you?-

77. "For they are enemies to me;(3177) not so the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds;

3177 The things that you worship are enemies to mankind: let me testify from my own personal experience: they are enemies to me: they can do me no good, but would lead me astray. Contrast with their importance or their power of mischief the One True God Whom I worship: He created me and all the Worlds; He cherishes me and guides me; He takes care of me; and when I die, He will give me new life; He will forgive me and grant me final Salvation. Will you then come to this true worship? How can you doubt, after seeing the contrast of the one with the other? Is it not as the contrast between Light and Darkness?'

78. "Who created me, and it is He Who guides me;

79. "Who gives me food and drink,

80. "And when I am ill, it is He Who cures me;

81. "Who will cause me to die, and then to life (again);

82. "And who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on the day of Judgment.

83. "O my Lord! bestow wisdom(3178) on me, and join me with the righteous;

3178 Having shown clearly the distinction between the False and the True, Abraham now shows in the form of a Prayer what his inmost wishes are. (1) He wants his soul enlightened with divine wisdom, and (2) his heart and life filled with righteousness; (3) he will not be content with working for himself or his own generation; his view extends to all future generations; (4) and of course he wishes to attain the goal of the righteous, the Garden of the Bliss of the Divine Countenance; but he is not content with this; for (5) he wants his father and relatives to share in his spiritual joy, so that he can proudly see all whom he can reach, in an honourable station (contrasted with disgrace) on the Day of Judgement.

84. "Grant me honourable mention on the tongue of truth(3179) among the latest (generations);

3179 *Cf.* 19:50 . The whole of the passage about Abraham there may be compared with this passage.

85. "Make me one of the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss;

86. "Forgive my father, for that he is among those astray;

87. "And let me not be in disgrace on the Day when (men) will be raised up;-

88. "The Day whereon neither(3180) wealth nor sons will avail,

3180 Now we have a vision of the Day of Judgement. Nothing will then avail except a pure heart; all sorts of the so-called "good deeds" of this world, without the motive of purity, will be useless. The contrast of the Garden of Bliss with the Fire of Misery will be plainly visible. Evil will be shown in its true colours -isolated, helpless, cursing and despairing, and all chances will then have been lost.

89. "But only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart;

90. "To the righteous, the Garden will be brought near,(3181)

3181 The Good will only see good (the Garden of Bliss), and the Evil will only see evil (the Fire of Hell). This type of contrast is shown to us in the world of our spiritual sense even in this life.

91. "And to those straying in Evil, the Fire will be placed in full view;

92. "And it shall be said to them: ´Where are the (gods) ye worshipped-

93. "´Besides Allah. Can they help you or help themselves?´

94. "Then they will be thrown headlong into the (Fire),- they and those straying(3182) in Evil,

3182 The false gods, being devils or personified false fancies, will all be involved in the punishment of Hell, together with their worshippers, and the ultimate sources of evil, the hosts of Iblis or Satan *(Cf.* 25:17-18).

95. "And the whole hosts of Iblis together.

96. "They will say there in their mutual bickerings:

97. "´By Allah, we were truly in an error manifest,(3183)

3183 *Error manifest:* 'our error is now plainly manifest, but it should have been manifest to us before it was too late, because the Signs of Allah were always around us'. This will be said by the ungodly, whose eyes will then be fully opened.

98. "´When we held you as equals with the Lord of the Worlds;

99. "´And our seducers were only those who were steeped in guilt.(3184)

3184 They now see that the people who seduced them were themselves evil and subject to the penalties of evil, and their seductions were frauds. They feel that they ought to have seen it before, for who would deliberately follow the paths of those condemned to misery and punishment? How simple they were not to see the true character of their seducers, though they had been warned again and again against them! It was their own folly that made them accept such obviously false guidance!

100. "´Now, then, we have none to intercede (for us),

101. "´Nor a single friend to feel (for us).

102. "´Now if we only had a chance of return we shall truly be of those who believe!´"(3185)

3185 This apparent longing for a chance of return is dishonest. If they were sent back, they would certainly return to their evil ways: 6:27 -28. Besides, they have had numerous chances already in this life, and they have used them for mischief or evil.

103. Verily in this is a Sign but most of them do not believe.

104. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

105. The people of Noah rejected the messengers.

106. Behold, their brother Noah(3186) said to them: "Will ye not fear ((Allah))?

3186 Noah's generation had lost all faith and abandoned themselves to evil. They had rejected the Message of messengers previously sent to the world. Noah was sent to them as one of themselves ("their brother"). His life was open before them: he had proved himself pure in heart and conduct (like the Prophet of Arabia long after him), and worthy of every trust. Would they fear Allah and follow his advice? They could see that he had no ends of his own to serve. Would they not listen to him?

107. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust:(3187)

3187 *Amin=one* to whom a trust had been given, with several shades of meaning implied: *e.g.,* (1) worthy of trust, (2) bound to deliver his trust, as a prophet is bound to deliver his Message, (3) bound to act entirely as directed by the trust, as a prophet is bound to give only the Message of Allah, and not add anything of his own, and (4) not seeking any interest of his own (*Cf.* n. 3224).

108. "So fear Allah, and obey me.

109. "No reward do I ask of you for it: my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds:

110. "So fear Allah, and obey me."(3188)

3188 Note the repetition rounds off the argument. See n. 3186 above.

111. They said: "Shall we believe in thee when it is the meanest that follow thee?"(3189)

3189 The leaders of the people are speaking, as the Quraysh leaders spoke in the time of the Holy Prophet. "We know that thou hast been trustworthy in thy life. But look at the 'rag tag and bob tail' that follow thee! Dost thou expect us to be like them or to be classed with them?" His answer was: "I know nothing against them; if they have done any wrong, or are only hypocrites, they are answerable to Allah; how can I drive them away from me, seeing that I am expressly sent to admonish all people?"

112. He said: "And what do I know as to what they do?

113. "Their account is only with my Lord, if ye could (but) understand.

114. "I am not one to drive away those who believe.(3190)

3190 *Cf.* 11:29 . All people who have faith have the right to come and listen to Allah's Word and receive Allah's Mercy, whether they are publicans and sinners, "Harijans" and "low-caste" men, men of "superior" or "inferior" races. The Prophet of Allah welcomes them all, as His Message had to shine before the whole world. (R).

115. "I am sent only to warn plainly in public."

116. They said: "If thou desist not, O Noah! thou shalt be stoned (to death)."(3191)

3191 Two other cases occur to me where prophets of Allah were threatened with death by stoning: one was Abraham (19:46), and the other was 'Shu'ayb (11:91). In neither case did the threats deter them from carrying out their mission. On the contrary, the threats recoiled on those who threatened. So also did it happen in the case of Noah and the Prophet.

117. He said: "O my Lord! truly my people have rejected me.

118. "Judge Thou, then, between me and them openly, and deliver me and those of the Believers who are with me."

119. So We delivered him and those with him, in the Ark filled (with all creatures).(3192)

3192 The story of Noah's Flood is told in 11:36-48. Here, the point emphasised in Noah's patience and constancy against threats, and the triumph and preservation of Allah's truth even though the world was ranged against it.

120. Thereafter We drowned those who remained behind.

121. Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe.(3193)

3193 This and the following verse run like a refrain throughout this Surah, and give the keynote to the subject matter: how the Message of Allah is preached, how it is rejected in all ages, and how it triumphs at last, through the Mercy of Allah. See 26:8-9, 67-68, 103-104, here (121-122), 139-140, 158-159, 174-175, and 190-191. (R).

122. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

123. The ´Ad (people) rejected(3194) the messengers.

3194 See n. 1040 to 7:65 for the 'Ad people and their location. Here, the emphasis is on the fact that they were materialists believing in brute force, and felt secure in their fortresses and resources, but were found quite helpless when Allah's Message came and they rejected it.

124. Behold, their brother Hud said to them: "Will ye not fear ((Allah))?

125. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust:(3195)

3195 Seen. 3187 to 26:107 above.

126. "So fear Allah and obey me.

127. "No reward do I ask of you for it: my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds.

128. "Do ye build a landmark on every high place to amuse yourselves?(3196)

3196 Any merely material civilisation prides itself on show and parade. Its votaries scatter monuments for all sorts of things in conspicuous places-monuments which commemorate deeds and events which are forgotten in a few generations! *Cf.* Shelley's poem on Ozymandias: "I am Ozymandias. King of Kings! Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!...Boundless and bare the lonely and level sands stretch far away!"

129. "And do ye get for yourselves fine buildings in the hope of living therein (for ever)?

130. "And when ye exert your strong hand, do ye do it like men of absolute power?(3197)

3197 "Without any responsibility or consideration for those who come within your power?"

131. "Now fear Allah, and obey me.(3198)

3198 See n. 3188 above.

132. "Yea, fear Him Who has bestowed on you freely all that ye know.(3199)

3199 The gifts are described generally, immaterial and material. "All that ye know" includes not only material things, but knowledge and the faculties by which knowledge may be used for human well-being, all that makes life beautiful and refined. "Cattle" means wealth generally, and "sons" means population and man-power. "Gardens and Springs" are things that contribute to the delight and pleasure of man.

133. "Freely has He bestowed on you cattle and sons,-

134. "And Gardens and Springs.

135. "Truly I fear for you the Penalty of a Great Day."(3200)

3200 "But you have misused all those gifts, and you will suffer the inevitable penalties for your misuse and for your ingratitude."

136. They said: "It is the same to us whether thou admonish us or be not among (our) Admonishers!(3201)

3201 "We are not going to attend to you whether you preach to us or not." The construction of the second clause, "or be not among our admonishers" is a rapier cut at Hud, as if they had said: "Oh yes! we have heard plenty of admonishers like you!" See the next verse.

137. "This is no other than a customary device of the ancients,(3202)

3202 They said, as many of our modern enemies of religion say, "you are only reviving an ancient superstition, a dope of the crowd; there is no such thing as a Hereafter, or the sort of punishments you announce!"

138. "And we are not the ones to receive Pains and Penalties!"

139. So they rejected him, and We destroyed them. Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe.

140. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

141. The Thamud (people) rejected(3203) the messengers.

3203 For the Thamud people see n. 1043 to 7:73. They were great builders in stone and a people with agricultural wealth, but they were an exclusive people and oppressed the poor. The point emphasised here is: "How long will your wealth last, especially if you depress your own people and dishonour Allah's Signs by sacrilege?" The inscriptions on Thamud remains of rock-cut buildings in Al Hijr are described in Appendix VII at the end of this Surah.

142. Behold, their brother Salih said to them: "Will you not fear ((Allah))?

143. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust.

144. "So fear Allah, and obey me.

145. "No reward do I ask of you for it: my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds.

146. "Will ye be left secure, in (the enjoyment of) all that ye have here?-

147. "Gardens and Springs,

148. "And corn-fields and date-palms with spathes near breaking(3204) (with the weight of fruit)?

3204 The date palm flowers on a long spathe: when the flowers develop into fruit, the heavy ones hang with the load of fruit. Thamud evidently were proud of their skill in producing corn and fruit and in hewing fine dwellings out of rocks, like the later dwellings of Roman times in the town of Petra .

149. "And ye carve houses out of (rocky) mountains with great skill.

150. "But fear Allah and obey me;

151. "And follow not the bidding of those who are extravagant,-(3205)

3205 They are told: "All your skill is very well; but cultivate virtue and do not follow the ways of those who put forward extravagant claims for men's powers and material resources, or who lead lives of extravagance in luxury and self-indulgence; that makes mischief: but the door to repentance is open: will you repent?"

152. "Who make mischief in the land, and mend not (their ways)."

153. They said: "Thou art only one of those bewitched!(3206)

3206 They think he is talking like a madman, and they say so.

154. "Thou art no more than a mortal like us: then bring us a Sign, if thou tellest the truth!"

155. He said: "Here is a she-camel: she has(3207) a right of watering, and ye have a right of watering, (severally) on a day appointed.

3207 For this she-camel, see n. 1044 to 7:73. The she-camel was to be a Sign and a test case. Would they respect her rights of watering (and pasturage)?

156. "Touch her not with harm, lest the Penalty of a Great Day seize you."

157. But they ham-strung her: then did they become full of regrets.(3208)

3208 Their regrets were too late. They had themselves asked for a Sign. The Sign had been given them in the she-camel, which their prophet Salih had put forward as a test case. Would they, through that symbol, respect the law of equity by which all people had rights in water and in the gifts of nature? They refused to respect that law, and committed sacrilege by deliberately killing the she-camel. They themselves came to an evil end.

158. But the Penalty seized them. Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe.

159. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

160. The people of Lut rejected(3209) the messengers.

3209 The story of Lut (Lot) will be found in 7:80-84: see n. 1049. Here the point is that the people of the Cities of the Plain were shamelessly addicted to vice against nature, and Lut's warning only exasperated them, until they were destroyed by a shower of brimstone.

161. Behold, their brother Lut said to them: "Will ye not fear ((Allah))?

162. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust.

163. "So fear Allah and obey me.

164. "No reward do I ask of you for it: my reward is only from the lord of the Worlds.

165. "Of all the creatures in the world, will ye approach males,

166. "And leave those whom Allah has created for you to be your mates? Nay, ye are a people transgressing (all limits)!"

167. They said: "If thou desist not, O Lut! thou wilt assuredly be cast out!"(3210)

3210 Their threat to cast him out has a grim significance in what actually happened. They were destroyed where they were, and he was glad to escape the dreadful Punishment according to the warning he had received.

168. He said: "I do detest(3211) your doings."

3211 He was only among them from a stern sense of duty. The whole atmosphere there was detestable to him, and he was glad to escape when duty no longer demanded his presence there. He prayed for deliverance from such surroundings.

169. "O my Lord! deliver me and my family from such things as they do!"

170. So We delivered him and his family,- all

171. **Except an old woman(3212) who lingered behind.**

3212 This was Lut's wife, who lingered behind and was among those who perished. See n. 1051 to 7:83.

172. **But the rest We destroyed utterly.**

173. **We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone):(3213) and evil was the shower on those who were admonished (but heeded not)!**

3213 See n. 1052 to 7:84.

174. **Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe.**

175. **And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might Most Merciful.**

176. **The Companions of the Wood(3214) rejected the messengers.**

3214 See n. 2000 to 15:78.

177. **Behold, Shu´ayb(3215) said to them: "Will ye not fear ((Allah))?**

3215 For Shu'ayb see n. 1054 to 7:85.

178. **"I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust.**

179. **"So fear Allah and obey me.**

180. **"No reward do I ask of you for it: my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds.**

181. **"Give just measure,(3216) and cause no loss (to others by fraud).**

3216 They were a commercial people, but they were given to fraud, injustice, and wrongful mischief (by intermeddling with others). They are asked to fear Allah and follow His ways: it is He Who also created their predecessors among mankind, who never prospered by fraud and violent wrongdoing, but only justice and fair dealing.

182. **"And weigh with scales true and upright.**

183. **"And withhold not things justly due to men, nor do evil in the land, working mischief.**

184. **"And fear Him Who created you and (who created) the generations before (you)"**

185. **They said: "Thou art only one of those bewitched!**

186. **"Thou art no more than a mortal like us, and indeed we think thou art a liar!(3217)**

3217 They deny that he is a prophet or that they are doing wrong, or that any former generations behaved differently. They think they are the true exponents of human nature, and that such as he-idealists-are mere madmen.

187. **"Now cause a piece of the sky to fall on us, if thou art truthful!"(3218)**

3218 'If you really claim any real contact with Allah, let us see if you can bring down a piece of the sky to fall on us!' *(Cf.* 52:44).

188. **He said: "My Lord knows best what ye do."(3219)**

3219 The challenge to bring down a piece of the sky was merely empty bravado, on the part of those who had called him a liar. But S hu'ayb does not insult them. He merely says: "Allah is the best judge of your conduct: what more can I say?" And Allah did punish them.

189. **But they rejected him. Then the punishment of a day of overshadowing gloom(3220) seized them, and that was the Penalty of a Great Day.(3221)**

3220 Perhaps a shower of ashes and cinders accompanying a volcanic eruption. If these people were the same as the Midianites, there was also an earthquake. See 7:91 and n. 1063.

3221 It must have been a terrible day of wholesale destruction-earthquake, volcanic eruption, lava, cinders and ashes and rumbling noises to frighten those whose death was not instantaneous.

190. **Verily in that is a Sign: but most of them do not believe.**

191. **And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.(3222)**

3222 See above, n. 3193 to 26:121.

192. **Verily this is a Revelation(3223) from the Lord of the Worlds:**

3223 The hostile reception of some of the previous Messengers having been mentioned, the special characteristics of the Qur'an are now referred to, to show (1) that it is true, and (2) that its rejection by the Makkan Pagans was of a piece with the previous experience in the history of man: vested interests resist Truth, but it conquers.

193. **With it came down the spirit of Faith and Truth-(3224)**

3224 *Al Ruh al Amin,* the epithet of Gabriel, who came with the inspired Messages to the Holy Prophet, is difficult to render in a single epithet in translation. In n. 3187 to 26:107 I have described some of the various shades of meaning attached to the adjective *Amin* as applied to a Prophet. A further signification as attached to the Spirit of Inspiration is that it is the very quintessence of Faith and Truth, unlike the lying spirits which delude men with falsehood. On the whole, I think, "the Spirit of Faith and Truth" will best represent the original here.

194. **To thy heart and mind,(3225) that thou mayest admonish.**

3225 *Qalb* (Heart) signifies not only the seat of the affections, but also the seat of the memory and understanding. The process of inspiration is indicated by the impression of the divine Message on the inspired one's heart, memory, and understanding, from which it was promulgated in human speech to the world. In this case the human speech was the perspicuous Arabic tongue, which would be plainly intelligible to the audience who would immediately hear it and be through them transmitted to all the world.

195. **In the perspicuous Arabic tongue.**

196. **Without doubt it is (announced) in the mystic Books(3226) of former peoples.**

3226 The word *Zubur,* used here, is plural of *Zabur,* which is mentioned in the Qur'an as the Book revealed to the Prophet Dawud. It has also been used in the Qur'an in the generic sense of "Book" (54:52). Here the word refers to the earlier Revelations. (Eds.). *(Cf.* n. 2759).

197. **Is it not a Sign to them that the Learned of the Children of Israel knew it (as true)?(3227)**

3227 Many of the Jewish Doctors recognised the Prophet's Message as a Message from Allah, *e.g.,* 'Abdullah ibn Salam and Mukhayriq. The latter was a man of property, which he left for Islam. (There were also Christian monks and learned men who recognised the Prophet's mission.)

198. **Had We revealed it to any of the non-Arabs,**

199. **And had he recited it to them, they would not have believed in it.(3228)**

3228 The turn of Arabia having come for receiving Allah's Revelation, as was foretold in previous Revelations, it was inevitable that it should be in the Arab tongue through the mouth of an Arab. Otherwise it would have been

unintelligible, and the Arabs could not have received the Faith and become the vehicles for its promulgation as actually happened in history.

200. Thus have We caused it to enter the hearts of the Sinners.(3229)

3229 "Thus" I think means through the medium of the Arabic language and the Arab people. The Qur'an penetrated through their language and their hearts. If the hardhearted among them did not believe, they will see when the Penalty comes, how grievous a mistake they made. For the Penalty must come; even when they least expected it. They will be caught saying or thinking, "There is plenty of time; we can get another respite," when already it will have become too late for them to turn over a new leaf.

201. They will not believe in it until they see the grievous Penalty;

202. But the (Penalty) will come to them of a sudden, while they perceive it not;

203. Then they will say: "Shall we be respited?"

204. Do they then ask for Our Penalty to be hastened on?(3230)

3230 While some sinners out of negligence postpone the day of repentance till it is too late, others more bold actually ask out of bravado that Allah's Punishment should be brought down on them at once, as they do not believe in Allah or His Punishment! The answer to them is: It will come soon enough-too soon, they will think, when it comes! *Cf.* 22:47 and notes, 37:176, and 38:16.

205. Seest thou? If We do let them enjoy (this life) for a few years,

206. Yet there comes to them at length the (Punishment) which they were promised!

207. It will profit them not that they enjoyed (this life)!

208. Never did We destroy a population, but had its warners -

209. By way of reminder; and We never are unjust.(3231)

3231 Allah will grant much respite to sinners, for He is Most Gracious and Merciful. But all this respite will profit them nothing if they are merely immersed in the vanities of this world. Again and again, in spite of their rebellion and their rejection, does Allah send warnings and warners before the final Punishment of Justice. For Allah knows human weakness, and He will never be unjust in the least.

210. No evil ones have brought(3232) down this (Revelation):

3232 When anything extraordinary happens, there are always people desirous of putting the worst construction on it, and saying that it is the work of the evil ones, the devils. So when the Qur'an came with its Message in wondrous Arabic, its enemies could only account for its power by attributing it to evil spirits! Such a beneficent message can never suit the purposes of the evil ones, nor would it be in their power to produce it. In fact Good and Evil are poles asunder, and Evil cannot even hear words of Good, of tender Pity for sinners and Forgiveness for the penitent!

211. It would neither suit them nor would they be able (to produce it).

212. Indeed they have been removed far from even (a chance of) hearing it.

213. So call not on any other god with Allah, or thou wilt be among those under the Penalty.

214. And admonish thy nearest kinsmen,

215. And lower thy wing(3233) to the Believers who follow thee.

3233 That is, be kind, gentle, and considerate with them, as a highflying bird is when she lowers her wing to her offspring. *Cf.* 17:24 and n. 2205, and 15:88 and n. 2011.

216. Then if they disobey thee, say: "I am free (of responsibility) for what ye do!"(3234)

3234 "Disobey thee" implied that they did something wrong, for the Prophet commanded what was right and forbade what was wrong. If, then, any of his flock did wrong the responsibility was not his, for he, like a good shepherd, tried to keep them right. What was he then to do? He would continue his teaching. But if any of them went so far wrong as to try to injure their own Teacher, Leader and guide, there was nothing for him to fear. His trust was only in Allah and Allah sees and appraises all men's actions at their true worth.

217. And put thy trust on the Exalted in Might, the Merciful,-

218. Who seeth thee standing forth (in prayer),

219. And thy movements among those who prostrate themselves.(3235)

3235 Literally, the standing and prostration are postures of Muslim prayer: the Holy Prophet was equally earnest, sincere, and zealous in prayer for himself and for all his people. The Prophet's behaviour was exemplary in all the turns of fortune, and however foolish men may cavil, his purity and uprightness are fully known to Allah. (R).

220. For it is He Who heareth and knoweth all things.

221. Shall I inform you, (O people!), on whom it is that the evil ones descend?(3236)

3236 To people who maliciously suggested that the Prophet was possessed or inspired by evil spirits (26:210 above) the reply had already been made, but it is now declared that the suggestion is itself the work of Evil. Behind such suggestions are lying and wickedness, or at best same half-truths caught up in hearsay and twisted so as to show Allah in an evil light.

222. They descend on every lying, wicked person,

223. (Into whose ears) they pour hearsay vanities, and most of them are liars.

224. And the Poets,-(3237) It is those straying in Evil, who follow them:

3237 *The Poets:* to be read along with the exceptions mentioned in verse 227 below. Poetry and other arts are not in themselves evil, but may, on the contrary, be used in the service of religion and righteousness. But there is a danger that they may, be prostituted for base purposes. If they are insincere ("they say what they do not") or are divorced from actual life or its goodness or its serious purpose, they may become instruments of evil or futility. They then wander about without any set purpose, and seek the depths (valleys) of human folly rather than the heights of divine light.

225. Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley?-

226. And that they say what they practise not?-

227. Except those who believe,(3238) work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of Allah, and defend themselves only after they are unjustly attacked. And soon will the unjust(3239) assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take!

3238 Poetry and the fine arts which are to be commended are those which emanate from minds steeped in the Faith, which try to carry out in life the fine sentiments they express in their artistic work, aim at the glory of Allah rather than at self-glorification or the fulsome praise of men with feet of clay, and do not (as in Jihad) attack anything except aggressive evil. In this sense a perfect artist should be

a perfect man. Perfection may not be attainable in this life, but it should be the aim of every man, and especially of one who wishes to become a supreme artist, not only in technique but in spirit and essentials. Among the commendable poets contemporary with the Holy Prophet may be mentioned Hassan and Labid: the latter had the honour of being one of the seven whose poems were selected for "hanging" (the *Mu'allaqat)* in the Days of Ignorance.

3239 These were the scurrilous rhymsters, who were doomed to come to an evil end.



27. Al Naml (The Ants)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Ta Sin.(3240) These are verses of the Qur´an,-a book that makes (things) clear;

3240 Seen. 3137 to 26:1.

2. A guide: and glad tidings for the believers,-(3241)

3241 Revelation is here presented in three aspects: (1) it explains things, the attributes of Allah, our own position, and the spiritual world around; (2) it directs us to right conduct and keeps us from evil; and (3) to those who have Faith and accept its guidance, it gives the good news of forgiveness, purification, and the achievement of salvation. (R).

3. Those who establish regular prayers and give in regular charity, and also have (full) assurance of the hereafter.

4. As to those who believe not in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds pleasing(3242) in their eyes; and so they wander about in distraction.

3242 Those who reject Allah and follow Evil have a good conceit of themselves. Their deeds are pleasing to no one else. As they have rejected Allah's guidance, they are allowed to embrace their own self-conceit, and given further respite for repentance. But they follow their own whims and wander about in distraction, as they have no standards such as guide the godly.

5. Such are they for whom a grievous Penalty is (waiting); and in the Hereafter theirs will be the greatest loss.(3243)

3243 The account will then be made up, and they will be found to be terribly in loss. They will be the worst in loss, for all their self-complacency.

6. As to thee, the Qur´an is bestowed upon thee from the presence of one who is wise and all-knowing.

7. Behold! Moses said(3244) to his family: "I perceive a fire; soon will I bring you from there some information, or I will bring you a burning brand to light our fuel, that ye may warn yourselves.

3244 *Cf.* 20:9-24. Both there and here there is a reference to the dawn of Revelation in the heart of Moses. The points there emphasised will be found in the notes to that passage. Here the emphasis is on the wonderful nature of the Fire and the wonderful way in which Moses was transformed at the touch of spiritual Light. He was travelling in the Sinai desert with his family. Seeking ordinary light, he came upon a Light which took him to the highest mysteries of Allah. No doubt all his inner history had prepared him for his great destiny. It is the inner history that matters, and not the place of the position of a man in the eyes of his ordinary fellows.

8. But when he came to the (fire), a voice was heard: "Blessed are those(3245) in the fire and those around: and glory to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

3245 *Those:* in the original the pronoun is in the singular, *"man",* which is often used with a plural meaning. The Commentators usually construe it to mean that this was not a physical fire, but it was the glory of the Angels, a reflection of the Glory of Allah. Hence the exclamation at the end of the verse.

9. "O Moses! verily, I am Allah, the exalted in might, the wise!....

10. "Now do thou throw thy rod!"(3246) But when he saw it moving (of its own accord)as if it had been a snake, he turned back in retreat, and retraced not his steps: "O Moses!" (it was said), "Fear not: truly, in My presence, those called as messengers have no fear,-(3247)

3246 Moses was now transported into an entirely new world. What he had taken to be an ordinary fire was a dream of the spiritual world-rays from the angels of light. The desert in which he had been was the lower life stripped of its ornaments, leading to the divine light of Sinai. Through that Light he heard the Voice of the Source of Wisdom and Power. His own rod or staff was no longer the dead piece of wood that had hitherto supported him. It became instinct with life, a life that moved, and had the power of offence and defence in it, as all living Good must have in its fight with Evil. His own transformation is described in the next note.

3247 In this great, new, wonderful world, that was opening out to Moses, he had to get his vision adjusted to his new surroundings, as an ordinary man has to adjust his sight before he can see into any very strong light that is new to him. The staff which had become alive as a snake frightened him: yet it was to be his own instrument of work in his new mission. All fear was to be cast out of his mind, as befitted a man chosen by Allah.

11. "But if any have done wrong and have thereafter substituted good to take the place of evil,(3248) truly, I am Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

3248 His slaying the Egyptian (n. 3146 to 26:14), however defensible from certain aspects, was yet something from his past that had to be washed off, and Allah, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, did it out of His abounding Grace. Nay, more; he was given a pure, Radiant Hand, as a Sign of his personal transformation, as stated in the next verse.

12. "Now put thy hand into thy bosom, and it will come forth white without stain(3249) (or harm): (these are) among the nine Signs (thou wilt take)(3250) to Pharaoh and his people: for they are a people rebellious in transgression."

3249 *Cf.* 20:22 - There the expression is: "Draw thy hand close to thy side." As far as the physical act is concerned, the expressions there and here mean the same thing. Moses had a loose-fitting robe. If he put his hand within the folds of the robe, it would go to his bosom on the side of his body opposite to that from which the hand came: *i.e.,* if it was his right hand it would go to the left side of his

bosom. But the difference of expression has little spiritual significance. The bosom here stands for his innermost being, which was being so transformed with divine light as to lend the radiance to his hand also, his instrument of action. The hand comes out white and radiant without a stain. Ordinarily if the skin becomes white it is a sign of disease or leprosy. Here it was the opposite. It was a sign of radiance and glory from the higher Light.

3250 *The nine Signs:* see n. 1091 to 7:133.

13. But when Our Signs came to them, that should have(3251) opened their eyes, they said: "This is sorcery manifest!"

3251 The Signs should have clearly opened the eyes of any persons who honestly examined them and thought about them. Those who rejected them were perverse and were going against their own light and inner conviction. That was the aggravating feature of their sin.

14. And they rejected those Signs in iniquity and arrogance, though their souls were convinced thereof: so see what was the end of those who acted corruptly!

15. We gave (in the past) knowledge to David and Solomon:(3252) And they both said: "Praise be to Allah, Who has favoured us above many of his servants who believe!"(3253)

3252 *Cf.* 21:78-82. "Knowledge" means such knowledge as leads up to the higher things in life, the Wisdom that was shown in their decisions and judgements, and the understanding that enabled them to fulfil their mission in life. They were both just men and prophets of Allah. The Bible, as we have it, is inconsistent: on the one hand it calls David "a man after God's own heart" (I Samuel, 13:14and Acts 13:22); and the Christians acclaim Christ as a son of David; but on the other hand, horrible crimes are ascribed to him, which, if he had committed them, would make him a monster of cruelty and injustice. About Solomon, too, while he is described as a glorious king, there are stories of his lapses into sin and idolatry. The Muslim teaching considers them both to be men of piety and wisdom, and high in spiritual knowledge.

3253 They ascribed, as was proper, their knowledge, wisdom, and power to the only true Source of all , Allah.

16. And Solomon was David´s heir.(3254) He said: "O ye people! We have been taught the speech(3255) of birds, and on us has been bestowed (a little) of all things: this is indeed Grace manifest (from Allah.)"(3256)

3254 The point is that Solomon not only inherited his father's kingdom but his spiritual insight and the prophetic office, which do not necessarily go from father to son.

3255 *Speech of Birds.* The spoken word in human speech is different from the means of communication which birds and animals have between each other. But no man can doubt that they have means of communication with each other, if he only observes the orderly flight of migratory birds or the regulated behaviour of ants, bees, and other creatures who live in communities. The wisdom of Solomon and others like him (he speaks of "we") consisted in understanding these things-in the animal world and in the lower fringes of human intelligence.

3256 *A little of all things:* Solomon was a king of power and authority; outside his kingdom he had influence among many neighbouring peoples: he had knowledge of birds, and beasts and plants: he was just and wise, and understood men: and above all, he had spiritual insight, which brought him near to Allah. Thus he had something of all kinds of desirable gifts. And with true gratitude he referred them to Allah, the Giver of all gifts.

17. And before Solomon were marshalled his hosts,- of Jinns and men and birds, and they were all kept in order and ranks.(3257)

3257 Besides the literal meaning, there are two symbolical meanings. (1) All his subjects of varying grades of intelligence, taste, and civilisation, were kept in due order and cooperation by his discipline, justice, and good government. (2) The gifts of various kinds, which he possessed (see last note), he used in proper order and coordination, as they were a well disciplined army, thus getting the best possible results from them.

18. At length, when they came to a (lowly) valley of ants, one of the ants said: "O ye ants, get into your habitations, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under foot) without knowing it."(3258)

3258 This verse and the next, read together, suggest the symbolical meaning as predominant. The ant, to outward appearances, is a very small and humble creature. In the great pomp and circumstances of the world, it may be neglected or even trampled on by a people who mean it no harm. Yet, by its wisdom, it carries on its own life within its own sphere ("habitations") unmolested, and makes a useful contribution to the economy of the world. So there is room for the humblest people in the spiritual world.

19. So he smiled, amused at her speech; and he said: "O my Lord! so order me that I may be grateful for Thy favours, which thou hast bestowed on me and(3259) on my parents, and that I may work the righteousness that will please Thee:(3260) And admit me, by Thy Grace, to the ranks of Thy righteous Servants."(3261)

3259 The counterpart to the position of the humble ant is the position of a great king like Solomon, He prays that his power and wisdom and other gifts may be used for righteousness and for the benefit of all around him. The ant being in his thoughts, we may suppose that he means particularly in his prayer that he may not even unwittingly tread on humble beings in his preoccupation with the great things of the world.

3260 The righteousness which pleases the world is often very different from the righteousness which pleases Allah. Solomon prays that he may always take Allah's Will as his standard, rather than the standards of men.

3261 In the Kingdom of Allah , righteousness is the badge of citizenship. And although there are great and noble grades (see n. 586 to 4:69), the base of that citizenship is the universal brotherhood of righteousness. The greatest in that Kingdom are glad and proud to pray for that essential badge.

20. And he took a muster of the Birds; and he said: "Why is it I see not the Hoopoe? Or is he among the absentees?(3262)

3262 Solomon was no idle or easy-going king. He kept all his organisation strictly up to the mark, both his armies literally and his forces (metaphorically). His most mobile arm was the Birds, who were light on the wing and flew and saw everything like efficient scouts. One day he missed the Hoopoe in his muster. The hoopoe is a light, graceful creature, with elegant plumage of many colours, and a beautiful yellow crest on his head, which entitles him to be called a royal bird.

21. "I will certainly punish him with a severe penalty, or execute him, unless he bring me a clear reason (for absence)."

22. But the Hoopoe tarried not far: he (came up and) said: "I have compassed (territory) which thou hast not compassed, and I have come to thee from Saba'(3263) with tidings true.

3263 Saba ' may reasonably be identified as the Biblical Sheba, (1 Kings 10:1-10). It is further referred to in the Surah called after its name: 34:15-20. It was a city in Yemen, said to have been three days journey (say 50 miles) from the city of San'a'. A (recent) German explorer, Dr. Ham Helfritz, claims to have located it in what is now Hadramawt territory. The famous dam of Ma'rib made the country very prosperous, and enabled it to attain a high degree of civilisation ("provided with every requisite" in the next verse). The Queen of Sheba therefore rightly held up her head high until she saw the glories of Solomon.

23. "I found (there) a woman(3264) ruling over them and provided(3265) with every requisite; and she has a magnificent throne.

3264 The Queen of Sheba (by name Bilqis in Arabian tradition) came apparently from Yemen , but she had affinities with Abyssinia and possibly ruled over Abyssinia also. The (Habashah) tribe (after whom Abyssinia was named) came from Yemen . Between the southern coast of Yemen and the northeastern coast of Abyssinia there are only the Straits of Bab al Mandab, barely twenty miles across. In the 10th or 11 century B.C. there were frequent invasions of Abyssinia from Arabia , and Solomon's reign of 40 years is usually synchronised with B.C. 992 to 952. The Sabaean and Himyarite alphabets in which we find the south Arabian pre-Islamic inscriptions, passed into Ethiopic, the language of Abyssinia . The Abyssinians possess a traditional history called "The Book of the Glory of Kings" *(Kebra Negast).* which has been translated from Ethiopic into English by

Sir E.A. Wallis Budge (Oxford. 1932). It gives an account of the Queen of Sheba and her only son Menyelek I, as founders of the Abyssinian dynasty. (R).

3265 *Provided with every requisite:* I take this to refer not only to the abundance of spices and gems and gold in her country, but to sciences and arts, and perhaps the spiritual possibilities which made her accept the religion of Unity and Truth (27:44).

24. "I found her and her people worshipping the sun besides Allah:(3266) Satan has made their deeds seem pleasing in their eyes, and has kept them away from the Path,- so they receive no guidance,-

3266 The ancient religions of the people of Saba ' (the Himyar or Sabaeans) consisted in the worship of the heavenly bodies, the sun, the planets, and the stars. Possibly the cult was connected with that of Chaldea , the homeland of Abraham: see 6:75-79 and notes thereon. Yemen had easy access to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf by way of the sea, as well as with Abyssinia . That accounts for the Christians of Najran and the Jewish dynasty of kings *(e.g.,* Dhu Nuwas, d. 525 A.C.) who persecuted them in the century before Islam-also for the Christian Abyssinian Governor Abrahah and his discomfiture in the year of the Prophet's birth (S. 105), say 570 AC. Jewish-Christian influences were powerful in Arabia in the sixth century of the Christian era.

The religion of these Sabaeans (written in Arabic with a *Sin)* should not be confounded with that of the Sabians (with a *Sad),* as to whom see n. 76 to 2:62.

25. "(Kept them away from the Path), that they should not worship Allah, Who brings to light(3267) what is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and knows what ye hide and what ye reveal.

3267 The false worship of the Sabaeans is here exposed in three ways: (1) that they were self-satisfied with their own human achievements, instead of looking up to Allah; and (2) that the light of the heavenly bodies which they worshipped was only dependent on the true Light of Allah, which extends over heaven and earth; the Creator should be worshipped rather than His Creation; and (3) Allah knows the hidden secrets of men's minds as well as the objects which they openly profess: are false worshippers really only worshipping their own selves or the "sins they have a mind to" and are therefore afraid to go to Allah, Who knows all?

26. "(Allah)!- there is no god but He!- Lord of the Throne(3268) Supreme!"

3268 The messenger (Hoopoe) is a pious bird, as befits a messenger of Solomon. After mentioning the false worship of the Sabaeans, he pronounces the Creed of Unity, and emphasises Allah's attribute as Lord of the Throne of Glory supreme, in order to make it clear that whatever may be the magnificence of a human throne such as he has described (in verse 25), he is not in any way misled from his loyalty to Solomon, the exponent of the true Religion of Liberty.

27. (Solomon) said: "Soon shall we see whether thou hast told the truth or lied!(3269)

3269 Solomon does not doubt his messenger's pleas that he has scouted a new country, but wants to test whether he has loosened the rein of imagination in describing its splendours or its worship.

28. "Go thou, with this letter of mine, and deliver it to them: then draw back from them, and (wait to) see what answer they return"...

29. (The queen) said: "Ye chiefs! here is delivered to me - a letter worthy of respect.

30. "It is from Solomon, and is (as follows): ´In the name(3270) of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful:

3270 Solomon expressly begins his letter with the formula of the true and universal Religion of Unity, and he invites to the true Faith the new people with whom he establishes honourable relations, not for worldly conquest but for the spreading of the Light of Allah.

31. "´Be ye not arrogant against me, but come to me in submission (to the true Religion).´"

32. She said: "Ye chiefs! advise me in (this) my affair: no affair have I decided except in your presence."

33. They said: "We are endued with strength, and given to vehement war: but the command is with thee; so consider what thou wilt command."

34. She said: "Kings, when they(3271) enter a country, despoil it, and make the noblest of its people its meanest thus do they behave.

3271 The character of Queen Bilqis, as disclosed here, is that of a ruler enjoying great wealth and dignity, and the full confidence of her subjects. She does nothing without consulting her Council, and her Council are ready to carry out her commands in all things. Her people are manly, loyal, and contented, and ready to take the field against any enemy in their country. But their queen is prudent in policy, and is not willing to embroil her country in war. She has the discrimination to see that Solomon is not like ordinary kings who conquer by violence. Perhaps in her heart she has a ray of divine light already, though her people are yet Pagans. She wishes to carry her people with her in whatever she does, because she is as loyal to them as they are to her. An exchange of presents would probably establish better relations between the two kingdoms. And perhaps she anticipates some spiritual understanding also, a hope which was afterwards realised. InBilqis we have a picture of womanhood, gentle, prudent, and able to tame the wilder passions of her subjects. (R).

35. "But I am going to send him a present, and (wait) to see with what (answer) return (my) ambassadors."

36. Now when (the embassy) came to Solomon, he said: "Will ye give me abundance in wealth? But that which Allah has given me is better than that which He has given you! Nay it is ye who rejoice in your gift!(3272)

3272 Poor Bilqis! she thought she had arranged with womanly tact to conciliate Solomon, and at the same time pacify her warlike subjects! But the effect of the embassy with presents was the very opposite. Solomon took it as an insult that she should send her presents instead of her submission to the true Religion! He flung back the presents at her, as much as to say, "Let these baubles delight your own hearts! Allah has blessed me with plenty of worldly goods, and something infinitely better, *viz.:* His Light and Guidance! Why do you say nothing about that? Will you only understand the argument of armies and violence?" Or perhaps his speech was only meant for the Sabaean crowd. For when she actually came, he treated her kindly, and she accepted the religion of Unity.

37. "Go back to them, and be sure we shall come to them with such hosts as they will never be able to meet: We shall expel them from there in disgrace, and they will feel humbled (indeed)."

38. He said (to his own men): "Ye chiefs! which of you can bring me her throne(3273) before they come to me in submission?"

3273 The throne is symbolical of power and dignity. So far her throne was based on material wealth: Solomon is going to alter it to a basis of Faith and the Religion of Unity.

39. Said an ´Ifrit,(3274) of the Jinns: "I will bring it to thee before thou rise from thy council: indeed I have full strength for the purpose, and may be trusted."

3274 *'Ifrit:* a large, powerful jinn, reputed to be crafty: hence he is anxious to be recognised as one that "could be trusted".

40. Said one who had knowledge(3275) of the Book: "I will bring it to thee within the twinkling of an eye!" Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him, he said: "This is by the Grace of my Lord!-(3276) to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful! and if any is grateful, truly his gratitude is (a gain) for his own soul; but if any is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Free of all Needs, Supreme in Honour !"(3277)

3275 The symbolic meaning still continues. The big *'Ifrit* had boasted of his brute strength, and his reliability. But this is not enough to transform a power (throne) based on materialism into one based on inward knowledge, knowledge of the heart and spirit, the sort of knowledge that comes from the Book of the Grace of Allah, the spirit of truth and benevolence which is the invisible magic of Prophets

of Allah. Even if worldly power and common honesty may be able to effect some good, it will take a comparatively long time, while the magic of spiritual love acts instantaneously. Solomon was thankful to Allah for he had men endowed with such power, and he had the throne of Bilqis transported to his Court and transformed as he desired, without Bilqis even knowing it. (R).

3276 If Solomon had been ungrateful to Allah, *i.e.,* if he had worked for his own selfish or worldly ends, he could have used the brute strength of the *'Ifrit* to add to his worldly strength and glory. Instead, he uses the higher magic of the Book-or the Spirit-to transform the throne of Bilqis for her highest good, which means also the highest good for her subjects, by the divine Light. He had the two alternatives, and he chooses the better, and he thus shows his gratitude to Allah for the Grace He had given him.

3277 Man's gratitude to Allah is not a thing that benefits Allah, for Allah is high above all needs; it benefits a man's soul and gives him higher rank in the spiritual world. *Per contra,* man's ingratitude will not detract from Allah's Glory and Honour or the value of Allah's generous gifts to man: for Allah as supreme in honour, glory and generosity. *Karim* in Arabic involved all three significations.

41. He said: "Transform her throne out of all recognition by her: let us see whether she is guided (to the truth)(3278) or is one of those who receive no guidance."

3278 The throne having been transformed, it will be a test to see whether BilqTs recognises it as her own and accepts it of her own free will as her own, or rejects it as something alien to her, something she will not accommodate herself to. So in our life. We get used to certain habits and customs and certain ways of thought. Allah's message comes to transform us and set us on a different kind of throne, with our own active and willing consent. If we are wise, we feel honoured and grateful- If we are "obstinately rebellious", we reject it as not our own, and pine for the old slavery, as the Israelites pined for Egypt when they were under Allah's guidance in the wilderness.

42. So when she arrived, she was asked, "Is this thy throne?" She said, "It was just like this;(3279) and knowledge was bestowed on us in advance of this, and we have submitted to Allah (in Islam)."

3279 Bilqis stands the test. She knows it was her throne, yet not exactly the same, for it was now much better. And she is proud of her good fortune, and acknowledges, for herself and her people, with gratitude, the light which was given to them by Allah, by which they recognised Allah's prophet in Solomon and received the true Religion with all their will and heart and soul.

43. And he diverted her(3280) from the worship of others besides Allah. for she was (sprung) of a people that had no faith.

3280 Some Commentators and Translators adopt an alternative construction for the last clause of the last verse and the first clause of this verse. They understand the former to be spoken by Solomon and to mean, 'we had knowledge of Allah's Message and accepted it before her.' They understand the latter to mean, 'the worship of others besides Allah diverted her (from the true Religion).' If we accept the construction adopted in this Translation, the visit to Solomon confirmed the true Faith of Bilqis and prevented her from lapsing into her ancestral false worship.

44. She was asked to enter(3281) the lofty Palace: but when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she (tucked up her skirts), uncovering her legs. He said: "This is but a palace paved smooth with slabs of glass." She said: "O my Lord! I have indeed wronged(3282) my soul: I do (now) submit (in Islam), with Solomon, to the Lord of the Worlds."

3281 Bilqis, having been received with honour on her arrival, and having accepted the transformation of her throne, placed presumably in an outer building of the Palace, is asked to enter the great Palace itself. Its floor was made of slabs of smooth polished glass, that glistened like water. She thought it was water, and tucked up her clothes to pass through it, showing her bare feet and ankles. This was a very undignified position for a woman, especially one of the position of a Queen. Solomon immediately undeceived her, and told her the real facts, when she felt grateful, and joined herself with Solomon in praising Allah.

3282 In symbolic language, a new entrant into the Palace of divine knowledge, may yet carry in his mind many of the illusions of the lower world, the transparent crystal of Truth he may yet mistake for the unstable water of worldly vanity, which soils the vestments of those who paddle in it. This leads to many undignified positions and mistakes. But a gentle leader points out the truth. Instead of resenting it, the new entrant is grateful, acknowledges her own mistake freely and frankly, and heartily joins with the Teacher in the worship of Allah, the Source of all truth and knowledge.

45. We sent (aforetime), to the Thamud, their brother(3283) Salih, saying, "Serve Allah.: But behold, they became two factions quarrelling with each other.

3283 The main story of Thamud, who were broken into two factions, the rich oppressing the poor and keeping them out of the good things of life and the test case of the She-camel, will be found in 26:141-159 and the notes thereon. The point here is the secret plot of the nine men against the Prophet of Allah, whose teaching, they thought, brought them ill-luck; but what they called ill-luck was the just punishment from Allah for their own ill-deeds. Their plot was foiled, and the whole community, which was involved in evil, was destroyed. (R).

46. He said: "O my people! why ask ye to hasten on the evil in preference to the good?(3284) If only ye ask Allah for forgiveness, ye may hope to receive mercy.

3284 *Cf.* 13:6. The evildoers were really hastening on their own punishment by their feuds against the poor. The advocates of justice were not bringing ill-luck to them. They were showing the way to ward it off. Their own injustice was bringing on them disaster.

47. They said: "Ill omen do we augur from thee and those that are with thee". He said: "Your ill omen is with Allah. yea, ye are a people under trial."(3285)

3285 All evil unpunished is not evil condoned, but evil given a chance for reform. They are on trial, by the mercy of Allah. What they call "ill omen" is really the just punishment for their ill-deeds, and that punishment rests with Allah. *(Cf.* 36:18-19).

48. There were in the city nine men of a family, who made mischief in the land, and would not reform.(3286)

3286 They had made up their minds to wage a relentless war against justice. They did not destroy justice, but justice destroyed them.

49. They said: "Swear a mutual oath by Allah that we shall make a secret night attack on him and his people,(3287) and that we shall then say to his heir (when he seeks vengeance): ´We were not present at the slaughter of his people, and we are positively telling the truth.´"

3287 A most dastardly plot, because (1) it was to be secret, (2) by night, (3) taking their victims unawares, and (4) because careful provision was made that they should all tell lies together, saying that they knew nothing about it, in order to evade the vengeance which Salih's heirs (if any were left) or his tribe might want to exact! And yet such were exactly the plots laid against the Holy Prophet himself.

50. They plotted and planned,(3288) but We too planned, even while they perceived it not.

3288 *Cf.* 3:54 . Their secret plotting is all known to Allah, but of Allah's just and beneficient plans they know nothing. And the wicked must come to an evil end.

51. Then see what was the end of their plot!- this, that We destroyed them and their people, all (of them).

52. Now such were their houses, - in utter ruin, - because they practised wrong- doing. Verily in this is a Sign for people of knowledge.

53. And We saved those who believed and practised righteousness.

54. (We also sent) Lut(3289) (as a messenger): behold, He said to his people, "Do ye do what is shameful though ye see (its iniquity)?

3289 The story of Lut is referred to elsewhere. The passages to which reference may be made here are: 26:160-175, and 7:80-84. But the point emphasised here is

that the crime of the Cities of the Plain was against their own nature, and they saw its enormity, and yet they indulged in it. Can degradation go further? His wife was not apparently a Believer. Her previous sympathy with the sinful people "destined her" (verse 57 below) to a miserable end, as she lagged behind and shared in the destruction of her kinsfolk.

55. Would ye really approach men in your lusts rather than women? Nay, ye are a people (grossly) ignorant!(3290)

3290 The ignorance referred to here is the spiritual ignorance, the ignorance of how grossness and sins that bring shame on their own physical and moral nature are doomed to destroy them: it is their own loss. That they knew the iniquity of their sins has already been stated in the last verse. That knowledge makes their spiritual ignorance all the more culpable, just as a man consciously deceiving people by half-truths is a greater liar than a man who tells lies inadvertently.

56. But his people gave no other answer but this: they said, "Drive out the followers of Lut from your city: these are indeed men who want to be clean and pure!"(3291)

3291 *Cf.* 7:82-84. Instead of being ashamed on account of the consciousness of their own guilt, they attack the pure ones with their sarcasm, as if not they but the pure ones were in the wrong, trying to set them on the right way.

57. But We saved him and his family, except his wife; her We destined to be of those who lagged behind.

58. And We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone): and evil was the shower on those who were admonished (but heeded not)!

59. Say: Praise be to Allah, and Peace on his servants(3292) whom He has chosen (for his Message). (Who) is better?- Allah or the false gods they associate (with Him)?

3292 Allah's revelation having been described as Light, Guidance, and Mercy, we ought all to be grateful to Allah for vouchsafing His revelation. We ought also to appreciate the services of Allah's Messengers, who are chosen to deliver His Message: we ought to send salutations of Peace on them, instead of plotting, as the wicked do, for their removal or persecution, or banishment or death, for these Prophets of Allah undergo every kind of hardship and forego every kind of advantage or pleasure in life for serving mankind. And Allah is truth and goodness, and all our fancies of false worship are falsehoods and evils. Shall we prefer falsehood and evil to truth and goodness? (R).

60. Or, Who has created(3293) the heavens and the earth, and Who sends you down rain from the sky? Yea, with it We cause to grow well-planted orchards full of beauty of delight: it is not in your power to cause the growth(3294) of the trees in them. (Can there be another) god besides Allah. Nay, they are a people who swerve from justice.

3293 The order, beauty, and grandeur of the universe are appealed to. They show unity of design and purpose. How can unjust, ignorant, foolish, heedless, false men think of a multiplicity of gods, or of any god besides the One True God?

3294 To make a single seed germinate and grow into a tree is beyond man's power. When it comes to a great well-laid-out garden of beauty and delight, no one would think it grew up of itself without a gardener's consummate art. And the orchard is more than the trees in it: there is design and beauty in their arrangement; proper spaces have to be left between them for the growth of their roots, for the aeration of the soil beneath them, and for the penetration of air and sunlight between their branches. How can anyone then think of the wonderful universe as a whole, without thinking of the far higher Unity of Design, the evidence of the One True Allah? (R).

61. Or, Who has made the earth firm to live in; made rivers in its midst; set thereon mountains immovable;(3295) and made a separating bar between the two bodies(3296) of flowing water? (can there be another) god besides Allah. Nay, most of them know not.

3295 *Cf.* 16:15 and notes 2038 and 2039. The *terra firma,* the flowing water, and the cycle of water circulation-sea, vapour, clouds, rain, rivers, and sea again-all one and yet all distinct, with a sort of wonderful barrier between salt water and fresh water: can man see all this and yet be ignorant of Allah?

3296 *Cf.* 25:53 and notes 3111 and 3112.

62. Or, Who listens to the (soul) distressed when it calls on Him, and Who relieves(3297) its suffering, and makes you (mankind) inheritors of the earth?(3298) (Can there be another) god besides Allah. Little it is that ye heed!

3297 Besides the evidence of external nature, there is still more intimate evidence in man's inne r conscience and heart. Allah listens to man's cry of agony and relieves his suffering, and He has given him superiority over other creation on this earth, through his mind and soul. Is man then going to run after inferior beings and forget Allah?

3298 *Cf.* 6:165, n. 988.

63. Or, Who guides you through the depths of darkness on land and sea, and Who sends the winds as heralds(3299) of glad tidings, going before His Mercy? (Can there be another) god besides Allah.- High is Allah above what they associate with Him!

3299 *Cf.* 25:48, n. 3104. After external nature, our attention was drawn to our inner consciousness; after that, it is drawn here to our social and collective life, in which we use the forces of nature for international intercourse, trade, agriculture, production, and economic well-being generally. In the next verse, we are asked to contemplate creation from its primeval stages, through its intermediate processes, to the final Destiny in a new creation-a new heaven and a new earth.

64. Or, Who originates creation, then repeats it,(3300) and who gives you sustenance from heaven and earth?(3301) (Can there be another) god besides Allah. Say, "Bring forth your argument, if ye are telling the truth!"(3302)

3300 *Cf.* 10:34 , and n. 1428.

3301 *Sustenance:* of course in the spiritual as well as the material sense *(Cf.* n. 3412).

3302 All the arguments point to the Unity of Allah: there is none whatever against it.

65. Say: None in the heavens or on earth, except Allah, knows what is hidden:(3303) nor can they perceive when they shall be raised up (for Judgment).

3303 The existence of Allah is certain. But nothing else can be known with certainty to our knowledge. He has told us of the Hereafter, and therefore we know it is true. But those who do not believe in Allah--what knowledge or certainty can they have? Even when it is actually coming, they will not have the sense to perceive it.

66. Still less can their knowledge comprehend the Hereafter: Nay, they are in doubt and uncertainty thereanent; nay, they are blind thereunto!(3304)

3304 The Unbelievers are generally materialists, who cannot go beyond the evidence of their physical senses. As to a spiritual vision of the future, their physical senses would only leave them in doubt and uncertainty, while their rejection of the spiritual Light makes them blind altogether to the spiritual world.

67. The Unbelievers say: "What! when we become dust,- we and our fathers,- shall we really be raised (from the dead)?

68. "It is true we were promised this,- we and our fathers before (us): these are nothing but tales of the ancients."

69. Say: "Go ye through the earth and see what has been the end of those guilty (of sin)."(3305)

3305 Even if the Unbelievers are willing to take any mystic doctrine, they have only to observe what has actually happened on the earth, and they will see that evil always came to an evil end, and that Truth and righteousness ultimately won.

70. But grieve not over them, nor distress thyself because of their plots.(3306)

3306 *Cf.* 16:127, and n. 2164. The righteous need not worry over the unjust. The plots of the unjust can never defeat or deflect the purpose of Allah.

71. They also say: "When will this promise (come to pass)? (Say) if ye are truthful."

72. Say: "It may be that some of the events which ye wish to hasten on may be (close) in your pursuit!"(3307)

3307 The Unbelievers—or even men of halfhearted faith-may say, "Why worry over distant future events? Take the day as it comes!" But that is a fallacy. Judgement is certain, and it may be that this very hour may be the hour of doom for any given individual. This is the hour of repentance and amendment. For Allah wishes well to all mankind in spite of their ingratitude.

73. But verily thy Lord is full of grace to mankind: Yet most of them are ungrateful.

74. And verily thy Lord knoweth all that their hearts do hide. As well as all that they reveal.

75. Nor is there aught of the unseen, in heaven or earth, but is (recorded)(3308) in a clear record.

3308 ***Cf.* 22:70, 36:12, 57:22. [Eds.].**

76. Verily this Qur´an doth explain to the Children of Israel most of the matters in which they disagree.(3309)

3309 The Jews had numerous sects. Some were altogether out of the pale, *e.g.,* the Samaritans, who had a separate Tawrah of their own: they hated the other J ews and were hated by them. But even in the orthodox body, there were several sects, of which the following may be mentioned: (1) the Pharisees, who were literalists, formalists, and fatalists, and had a large body of traditional literature, with which they overlaid the Law of Moses; (2) the Sadducees, who were rationalists, and seemed to have doubted the doctrine of the Resurrection or of a Hereafter; (3) the Essenes, who practised a sort of Communism and Asceticism and prohibited marriage. About many of their doctrines they had bitter disputes, which were settled by the Qur'an, which supplemented and perfected the Law of Moses. It also explained clearly the attributes of Allah and the nature of Revelation, and the doctrine of the Hereafter.

77. And it certainly is a Guide and a Mercy to those who believe.

78. Verily thy Lord will decide between them by His Decree:(3310) and He is Exalted in Might, All-Knowing.

3310 'Decree': *hukm:* the disputes between rival sects can only be settled by the Decree of Allah-(l) in the form of a Revelation, as was done by the Qur'an, or (2) by the logic of events, for hundreds of sects have been extinguished and forgotten in the course of time, and (3) in the Decree of J udgement in the Hereafter, when all warring sects will at length see their errors.

79. So put thy trust in Allah. for thou art on (the path of) manifest Truth.

80. Truly thou canst not cause the dead to listen, nor canst thou cause the deaf to hear the call, (especially) when they turn back in retreat.(3311)

3311 The Prophet's responsibility was to preach and show the way. Men and women of good will had faith and accepted the Message. But he was not responsible for the obstinacy and perversity of men who turned away from Allah's Signs and rejected the Truth.

81. Nor canst thou be a guide to the blind, (to prevent them) from straying: only those wilt thou get to listen who believe in Our Signs, and they will bow in Islam.

82. And when the Word is(3312) fulfilled against them (the unjust), we shall produce from the earth a beast to (face) them:(3313) He will speak to them, for that mankind did not believe with assurance in Our Signs.

3312 *The Word:* the Decree or Sentence, the Decision to end the respite and restore the true values of right and wrong in a new world: their cup of iniquity will then have been full.

3313 The Beast will be one of the Signs of the Last Day to come, before the present World passes away and the new World is brought into being. In symbolic language it would represent gross Materialism. It will be the embodiment of fat worldly triumph, which will appeal to a misguided and degenerate world, because such a corrupt world will have no assured belief in the Signs of Allah or in spiritual Light. It will itself be a Sign or Portent, closing the door of repentance. I do not know whether this Beast has any reference to the symbolism in chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation, which closes the New Testament. If *taklimuhum* is read instead of *tukallimuhum,* it would mean that the Beast would wound them, symbolically, that Materialism would produce its own Nemesis.

83. One day We shall gather together from every people a troop of those who reject our Signs, and they shall be kept in ranks,-

84. Until, when they come (before the Judgment-seat), (Allah) will say: "Did ye reject My Signs, though ye(3314) comprehended them not in knowledge, or what was it ye did?"

3314 The charge against them will be: 'You had no knowledge, and yet you arrogantly rejected My Signs; is that true, or have you any plea in your defence?'

85. And the Word will be(3315) fulfilled against them, because of their wrong-doing, and they will be unable to speak (in plea).

3315 There will be no plea, because the charge will be only too true. The Decree will be passed and executed.

86. See they not that We have made the Night for them to rest in and the Day to give(3316) them light? Verily in this are Signs for any people that believe!

3316 *Night, Day, Rest,* and *Light:* both in the literal and the symbolic sense. Any one with a scrap of faith or spiritual insight could see that the Night is a blessing when used for rest and a curse when used to cover ignorance or sin; and that the Day is for work and enlightenment, and its misuse is gross ingratitude to Allah. Or, understand Truth and practise Righteousness while it is yet Light and the Message of Allah is here to guide you: for there comes the Night when Endeavour will cease and there will be no room for Repentance.

87. And the Day that the Trumpet will be sounded - then will be smitten with terror those who are in the heavens, and those who are on earth, except such as Allah will please (to exempt): and all shall come to His (Presence) as beings conscious of their lowliness.(3317)

3317 Arrogance will flee with Ignorance, and Self will see itself in its true place-that of humility and lowliness-when the scales of ignorance fall from its eyes.

88. Thou seest the mountains and thinkest them firmly fixed:(3318) but they shall pass away as the clouds pass away: (such is) the artistry of Allah, who disposes of all things(3319) in perfect order: for he is well acquainted with all that ye do.

3318 This is so in the present phase of phenomenal things, both literally and figuratively. There seems nothing more firm or fixed or permanent than the "eternal hills": yet when the new order of things comes and the new World is brought into being, they will be as flimsy and insubstantial as clouds. So, in the revelation of things in the spiritual World, persons or things or ideas that seem so

great and so firmly established now will pass away like mere fancies and give way to the Reality of Allah.

3319 *Atqana.* to arrange or dispose of things with art, or so as to obtain the most perfect results. The present phenomenal world and the Future that is to be, all have a definite object and purpose in the Plan of Allah, Who knows perfectly what we are, what we do, what we think, and what we need. Who can praise His artistry enough?

89. If any do good, good will (accrue) to them therefrom; and they will be secure from terror that Day.

90. And if any do evil, their faces will be thrown headlong into the Fire:(3320) "Do ye receive a reward other than that which ye have earned by your deeds?"(3321)

3320 *Headlong:* It may be that the very things of which we were proudest, which we considered foremost in our present order of the world, will be the first to go into the Fire, as they are but the window-dressing *(i.e.,* faces) of Evil.

3321 There will be no punishment except such as has been deserved by actual conduct in the present life of probation.

91. For me, I have been commanded to serve the Lord(3322) of this city, Him Who has sanctified it and to Whom (belong) all things: and I am commanded to be of those who bow in Islam to Allah.s Will,-

3322 *The Lord of this City.* This was spoken in Makkah, say about the 5th year before the Hijrah, when the Holy Prophet and his adherents were being persecuted as enemies to the cult of Makkah. So far from being against the true spirit of the Holy City of Makkah, it was actually in furtherance of that spirit, which had been overlaid by the idolatries and abominations of the Pagan Quraysh. They are told that the new Teaching is from the Lord of Makkah itself, the One True God, Who had sanctified it in the time of Abraham. Lest they should think that it was a local or tribal or narrow cult, it is added that He is not only Lord of this city, but Lord of the Worlds, "to Whom belong all things". It is a universal message: but how sad it would be if the Makkans, among whom it came first, were to reject it?

92. And to rehearse the Qur´an:(3323) and if any accept guidance, they do it for the good of their own souls, and if any stray, say: "I am only a Warner".

3323 The duty of the Prophet and his adherents was, first, to accept Islam and become themselves shining examples of Allah's grace and mercy, as they in fact were, and secondly to preach that message and spread that Light to all around. It was not for them to force it on unwilling people: for any who rejected it would find their own spiritual loss in such rejection. But they must clearly warn them of the consequences.

93. And say: "Praise be to Allah, Who will soon show you(3324) His Signs, so that ye shall know them"; and thy Lord is not unmindful of all that ye do.(3325)

3324 In a few years after that, many wonderful things happened that removed the doubts of the doubters and confirmed the faith of the Believers. They showed how the logic of events proved the true mission of the holy Prophet. Other things some minds may not be able to grasp. But the logic of events is for all to see.

3325 Trials and tribulations, persecution and exile, and the patient endurance and constancy with which they were met by the Believers-all are known to Allah and will be credited to their spiritual account.



28. Al Qasas (The Narrations)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Ta. Sin. Mim.(3326)

3326 See n. 3137 to 26:1.

2. These are Verses of the Book that makes (things) clear.(3327)

3327 See n. 3138 to 26:2.

3. We rehearse to thee some of the story of Moses and Pharaoh in Truth, for people who believe.(3328)

3328 The part of the story of Moses told here is how Moses and his mother were guided in the child's infancy, that even as he grew up, he might be prepared for his high destiny; how in youth he trusted Allah in the most awkward situations and sought his help; how he fled into exile, and yet found love and support because of his well-doing; and how, when he was called to bis mission, he received Allah's favour, which defeated all the plots of his enemies. Thus Allah's Plan works continuously in the web of events. Those who have faith will thus see the hand of Allah in everything and welcome the light that conies to them by Revelation. With such a Faith there is no room for Chance or blind Fate. (R).

4. Truly Pharaoh elated himself in the land and broke up its people into sections,(3329) depressing a small group among them: their sons he slew, but he kept alive their females: for he was indeed a maker of mischief.

3329 For a king or ruler to make invidious distinctions between his subjects, and specially to depress or oppress any particular class of his subjects, is a dereliction of his kingly duties, for which he is responsible to Allah. Pharaoh and his clique were intoxicated with pride of race and pride of material civilisation, and grievously oppressed the Israelites. Pharaoh decreed that all sons born to his Israelite subjects should be killed, and the females kept alive for the pleasure of the Egyptians. Moses was saved in a wonderful way, as related further.

5. And We wished to be Gracious to those who were being depressed on the land.(3330) To make them leaders (in Faith) and make them heirs,

3330 What Pharaoh wished was to crush them. But Allah's Plan was to protect them as they were weak, and indeed to make them custodians and leaders in His Faith, and to give them in inheritance a land "flowing with milk and honey". Here they were established in authority for such time as they followed Allah's Law. As regards Pharaoh and his ministers and hosts, they were to be shown that they would suffer, at the hands of the Israelites, the very calamities against which they were so confidently taking precautions for themselves.

6. To establish a firm place for them in the land, and to show Pharaoh, Haman,(3331) and their hosts, at their hands, the very things against which they were taking precautions.(3332)

3331 Haman was evidently Pharaoh's minister, not to be confounded with a Haman who is mentioned in the Old Testament (Esther 3:1), as a minister of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) King of Persia, the same who invaded Greece, and ruled from B.C. 485 to 464.

3332 Pharaoh was trying to kill the Israelites. Instead, the Plagues of Egypt, invoked by Moses, killed thousands of Egyptians (7:133. and notes 1091-92), because "they were steeped in arrogance,-a people given to sin." In pursuing the Israelites in their flight, Pharaoh and his army were themselves overwhelmed in the sea.

7. So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: "Suckle (thy child), but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river,(3333) but fear not nor grieve: for We shall restore him to thee, and We shall make him one of Our messengers."

3333 The Egyptian midwives had orders to kill Israelite babies. Moses was saved from them, and his mother nursed the infant at her breast herself. But when the danger of discovery was imminent, she put him into a chest or basket, and floated him on the river Nile . It flowed by the King's palace, and the chest with the baby was picked up, as related further on. The mother had no cause to fear or grieve afterwards, as the child grew up under her tender care and became afterwards one of the Prophets of Allah.

8. Then the people of Pharaoh picked him up (from the river): (It was intended) that (Moses) should be to them an adversary and a cause of sorrow:(3334) for Pharaoh and Haman and (all) their hosts were men of sin.

3334 This was the Plan of Providence; that the wicked might cast a net round themselves by fostering the man who was to bring them to naught and be the instrument of their punishment-or (looking at it from the other side) that Moses might learn all the wisdom of the Egyptians in order to expose all that was hollow and wicked in it.

9. The wife of Pharaoh said: "(Here is) joy of the eye,(3335) for me and for thee: slay him not. It may be that he will be use to us, or we may adopt him as a son." And they perceived not (what they were doing)!(3336)

3335 He was a darling to look at, and Pharaoh had apparently no son, but only a daughter, who afterwards irone. This is on the supposition that the Pharaoh was Thothmes I (see Appendix IV, S. 7).

3336 In all life Providence so orders things that Evil is defeated by its own weapons. Not only is it defeated, but it actually, though unwittingly, advances the cause of Good! In non-religious language this is called the work of the Ironic Fates. If Thomas Hardy had not made Napoleon the Puppet of Fate in his "Dynasts", he could well have taken Pharaoh as an illustration of the Irony of Fate, or, as we should prefer to call it, the working of the Universal Plan of Allah. (R).

10. But there came to be a void in the heart of the mother of Moses: She was going almost to disclose his (case), had We not strengthened her heart (with faith), so that she might remain a (firm) believer.(3337)

3337 The mother's heart felt the gaping void at parting from her son; but her Faith in Allah's Providence kept her from betraying herself.

11. And she said to the sister of (Moses), "Follow him" so she (the sister) watched him in the character of a stranger. And they knew not.

12. And we ordained that he refused suck at first, until (His sister came up and) said: "Shall I point out to you the people of a house that will nourish and bring him up for you(3338) and be sincerely attached to him?"...

3338 *For you: i.e.,* on your behalf. Thus Moses got the benefit of his mother's milk (symbolical of all the traditions and spiritual heritage of his ancestry and his people) as well as the prestige and the opportunities of being brought up in the royal family, with the best of teachers to teach him Egyptian wisdom. In addition, there was the comfort to his mother.

13. Thus did We restore him to his mother, that her eye might be comforted, that she might not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of Allah is true: but most of them do not understand.(3339)

3339 Allah's promise is always true, but short-sighted people, if they are a little thwarted in their plan, do not understand that Allah's wisdom, power, and goodness are far more comprehensive than any little plans which they may form.

14. When he reached full age, and was firmly established(3340) (in life), We bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge: for thus do We reward those who do good.

3340 *Full age* may be taken to be mature youth, say between 18 and 30 years of age. By that time a person is fully established in life: his physical build is completed, and his mental and moral habits are formed. In this case, as Moses was good at heart, true and loyal to his people, and obedient andjust to those among whom he lived, he was granted wisdom and knowledge from on high, to be used for the times of conflict which were coming for him. His internal development being complete, he now goes out into the outer world, where he is again tried and proved, until he gets his divine commission.

15. And he entered the city at a time when its people(3341) were not watching: and he found there two men fighting,- one of his own religion, and the other, of his foes. Now the man of his own religion appealed to him against his foe, and Moses struck(3342) him with his fist and made an end of him. He said: "This is a work of Evil (Satan): for he is an enemy that manifestly misleads!"

3341 That may have been either the time of the noontide siesta, when all business is suspended even now in Egypt , or the time of night, when people are usually asleep. The latter is more probable, in view of verse 18 below. But there is also another suggestion. A guest in a Palace is not free to wander about at will in the plebeian quarters of the City at all sorts of hours, and this applies even more to an inmate of the Palace brought up as a son. Moses was therefore visiting the City privately and eluding the guards. His object may have been to see for himself how things were going on; perhaps he had heard that his people were being oppressed, as we may suppose that he had retained contact with his mother.

3342 His object was apparently to strike him so as to release the Israelite, not to kill the Egyptian. In fact he killed the Egyptian. This was unfortunate in more ways than one. His visit to the City was clandestine; he had taken the side of the weaker and despised party; and he had taken the life of an Egyptian. He was full of regrets and repentance, and he prayed to Allah, and obtained Allah's forgiveness.

16. He prayed: "O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul! Do Thou then forgive me!" So ((Allah)) forgave him: for He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

17. He said: "O my Lord! For that Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace on me, never shall I be a help to those who sin!"(3343)

3343 He takes a conscious and solemn vow to dedicate himself to Allah, and to do nothing that may in any way assist those who were doing wrong. This was his general idea, but no plan had yet shaped itself in his mind, until a second catastrophe brought matters to a head, and he was plunged in adventure.

18. So he saw the morning in the city, looking about, in a state of fear, when behold, the man who had, the day before, sought his help called aloud for his help (again). Moses said to him: "Thou art truly, it is clear, a quarrelsome fellow!"(3344)

3344 The man was an Israelite. But Moses was himself in a distracted mood, for the reasons given in n. 3342 above, and he was exasperated at this public appeal to him again.

19. Then, when he decided to lay hold of the man who was(3345) an enemy to both of them, that man said: "O Moses! Is it thy intention to slay me as thou slewest a man yesterday? Thy intention is none other than to become a powerful violent man in the land, and not to be one who sets things right!"(3346)

3345 When Moses considered further that the Egyptian was unjust and that the Egyptian was an enemy to Israel generally (including both Moses and the man assaulted), he was going to intervene again, when he received a double warning, one from the Egyptian who was fighting, and the other from some man (Israelite

or Egyptian) who was friendly to him, as explained below. We may suppose that after the first day's fight, there had been a great deal of talk in the bazaars, both among Israelites and Egyptians. Probably the Israelites were elated at finding a champion-perhaps more elated than they should have been, and in a provocative mood, which deserved Moses' rebuke. Probably the Egyptians had discussed who this new champion was, and had already appraised the Palace, to which Moses had not dared to return.

3346 The Egyptian saw the tactical advantage of his position. In effect he said: 'We have found out all about you. You live in the Palace, and yet you come clandestinely and kill our Egyptians. Are you going to do the same with me? You are nothing but a bully! And you talk of setting things right! That is what you should do if you were true to your salt!'

20. And there came a man, running, from the furthest end(3347) of the City. He said: "O Moses! the Chiefs are taking counsel together about thee, to slay thee: so get thee away, for I do give thee sincere advice."

3347 Apparently rumours had reached the Palace, a Council had been held, and the death of Moses had been decreed!

21. He therefore got away therefrom,(3348) looking about, in a state of fear. He prayed "O my Lord! save me from people given to wrong-doing."

3348 Moses saw that his position was now untenable, both in the Palace and in the City, and indeed anywhere in Pharaoh's territory. So he suffered voluntary exile. But he did not know where to go to. His mind was in a state of agitation. But he turned to Allah and prayed. He got consolation, and felt that after all it was no hardship to leave Egypt , where there was so much injustice and oppression.

22. Then, when he turned his face towards (the land of) Madyan,(3349) he said: "I do hope that my Lord will show me the smooth and straight Path."

3349 East of Lower Egypt, for about 300 miles, runs the Sinai Peninsula, bounded on the south by the Gulf of Suez, and on the north by what was the Isthmus of Suez, now cut by the Suez Canal . Over the Isthmus ran the highroad to Palestine and Syria , but a fugitive could not well take that road, as the Egyptians were after him. If he could, after crossing the Isthmus, plunge into the Sinai desert, east or southeast, he would be in the Midianite territory, where the people would be Arabs and not Egyptians. He turned thither, and again prayed to Allah for guidance.

23. And when he arrived at the watering (place) in Madyan,(3350) he found there a group of men watering (their flocks), and besides them he found two women who were keeping back (their flocks). He said: "What is the matter with you?" They said: "We cannot water (our flocks) until the shepherds take back (their flocks): And our father is a very old man."(3351)

3350 The first thing that a wanderer in a desert would make for would be an oasis where he could get water from a spring or well, the shade of trees against the scorching sun, and some human company. The Midianite watering place was probably a deep well, as surface springs are rare in sandy desert, where the water level is low, unless there was a hill from which issued a spring.

3351 Here is a pretty little idyll, told in the fewest and most beautiful words possible. Moses arrives, at an oasis in the desert, weary and travel-worn, with his mind full of anxiety and uncertainty owing to his recent experiences in Egypt . He was thirsty and would naturally seek water. At the well or spring he found shepherds (or perhaps goat-herds) watering their flocks. As a stranger it was not for him to thrust himself among them. He waited under the shade of a tree until they should finish. He noticed two damsels, also waiting, with their flocks, which they had come to water. His chivalry was roused. He went at once among the goat-herds, made a place for the flocks of the damsels, gave them water, and then resumed his place in the shade. They were modest maidens, and had given him in three Arabic words the key of the whole situation. *Abuna shaykhun kabi r* our father is very old man, and therefore cannot come to water the flocks; we therefore do the work; we could not very well trust ourselves among these men.'

24. So he watered (their flocks) for them; then he turned back to the shade, and said:"O my Lord! truly am I in (desperate) need of any good that Thou dost send me!"(3352)

3352 The maidens are gone, with smiles on their lips and gratitude in their hearts. What were the reflections of Moses as he returned to the shade of the tree? He returned thanks to Allah for the bright little vision which he had just seen. Had he done a good deed? Precious was the opportunity he had had. He had slaked his thirst. But he was a homeless wanderer and had a longing in his soul, which he dared not put into words. Those shepherds were no company for him. He was truly like a beggar in desperate need. For any little good that came his way, he was grateful. But what was this?-this vision of a comfortable household, presided over by an old man rich in flocks and herds, and richer still in two daughters, as modest as they were beautiful? Perhaps he would never see them again! But Providence was preparing another surprise for him.

25. Afterwards one of the (damsels) came (back) to him, walking bashfully. She said: "My father invites thee that he may reward thee for having watered(3353) (our flocks) for us." So when he came to him and narrated the story, he said: "Fear thou not: (well) hast thou escaped from unjust people."(3354)

3353 Scarcely had he rested, when one of the damsels came back, walking with bashful grace! Modestly she gave her message, 'My father is grateful for what you did for us. He invites you, that he may thank you personally, and at least give some return for your kindness.'

3354 Nothing could have been more welcome than such a message, and through such a messenger. Moses went of course, and saw the old man. He found such a well-ordered patriarchal household. The old man was happy with his daughters and they with him. There was mutual confidence. They had evidently described the stranger to him in terms which made his welcome a foregone conclusion. On the other hand Moses had allowed his imagination to paint the father in something of the glorious colours in which his daughters had appeared to him like an angelic vision. The two men got to be friends at once. Moses told the old man his story-who he was, how he was brought up, and what misfortunes had made him quit Egypt . Perhaps the whole household, including the daughters, listened breathlessly to his tale. Perhaps their wonder and admiration were mingled with a certain amount of pity-perhaps with some more tender feeling in the case of the girl who had been to fetch him. Perhaps the enchantment which Desdemona felt in Othello's story was working on her. In any case the stranger had won his place in dieir hearts. The old man, the head of the household, assured him of hospitality and safety under his roof. As one with a long experience of life he congratulated him on his escape. 'Who would live among unjust people? It is as well you are free of them!'

26. Said one of the (damsels): "O my (dear) father! engage(3355) him on wages: truly the best of men for thee to employ is the (man) who is strong and trusty"....(3356)

3355 A little time passes. A guest after all cannot stay forever. They all felt that it would be good to have him with them permanently. The girl who had given her heart to him had spoken their unspoken thoughts. Why not employ him to tend the flocks? The father was old, and a young man was wanted to look after the flocks. And-there may be other possibilities.

3356 *Strong and trusty:* Moses had proved himself to be both, and these were the very qualities which a woman most admires in the man she loves.

27. He said: "I intend to wed one of these my daughters to thee, on condition that thou serve me for eight years;(3357) but if thou complete ten years, it will be (grace) from thee. But I intend not to place thee under a difficulty: thou wilt find me, indeed, if Allah wills, one of the righteous."

3357 A little time passed, and at length the father broached the subject of marriage. It was not for the fugitive to suggest a permanent tie, especially when, in the wealth of this world, the girl's family was superior, and they had an established position, while he was a mere wanderer. The father asked if he would marry one of the daughters and stay with them for at least eight years, or if he liked, ten years, but the longer term was at his option. If he brought no dower, his service for that period was more than sufficient in lieu of dower. The particular girl intended was no doubt tacitly settled long before, by the mutual attraction of the young hearts themselves. Moses was glad of the proposal, and accepted it. They ratified it in the most solemn manner, by appealing to Allah. The old man, knowing the worth of his son-in-law, solemnly assured him that in any event he would not take advantage of his position to be a hard task-master or to insist on anything inconsistent with Moses's interests, should a new future open out to him. And a new and glorious future was awaiting him after his apprenticeship.

28. He said: "Be that (the agreement) between me and thee: whichever of the two terms I fulfil, let there be no ill-will to me. Be Allah a witness to what we say."(3358)

3358 In patriarchal society it was not uncommon to have a marriage bargain of this kind conditional on a certain term of service. In this case the episode conveys two lessons. (1) A man destined to be a messenger of Allah is yet a man, and must pass through the ups and downs of life like any other man: only he will do it with more grace and distinction than other men. (2) The beautiful relations in love and marriage may themselves be a preparation for the highest spiritual destiny that may await a Messenger of Allah. A woman need not necessarily be a snare and a temptation: she may be the understanding help-mate that the Lady Khadijah was to the Holy Prophet.

29. Now when Moses had fulfilled the term, and was travelling(3359) with his family, he perceived a fire in the direction of Mount Tur. He said to his family: "Tarry ye; I perceive a fire; I hope to bring you from there some information, or a burning firebrand, that ye may warm yourselves."(3360)

3359 The episode in the desert, full of human interest, now closes, and we come to the threshold of the sacred Call to the divine ministry of Moses. Here we may compare this passage with that in 27:7-14 and previous passages. In this passage we are told, after reference to Moses's preparation for his high destiny, of the particular sin of Arrogance and Sacrilege of which Pharaoh was guilty (28:38-39), how it was punished, and with what instruments in the hands of Moses and Pharaoh. The notes on the earlier passage should be read, as explanations already given need not now be repeated. (R).

3360 Note how the transition is effected from the happy earthly life of Moses (with its previous earthly storm and stress) to the new spiritual storm and stress of his prophetic mission.

30. But when he came to the (fire), a voice was heard from the right bank of the valley, from a tree(3361) in hallowed ground: "O Moses! Verily I am Allah, the Lord of the Worlds....

3361 We are to suppose the appearance of a bush burning but not consumed (Exod. 3:2), a device adopted by the Scottish Church in its armorial bearings. Scotland apparently took that emblem and motto (Nes tamen consumebatur, 'nevertheless it was not consumed') from the Synod of the Reformed Church of France, which had adopted it in 1583. (I am indebted for this information to the Rev. D.Y. Robertson, Chaplain of the Church of Scotland in Simla , India). The real explanation of the Burning Bush will be found in 27:8. n. 3245: it was not a fire, but a reflection of the Glory of God.

31. "Now do thou throw thy rod!" but when he saw it moving (of its own accord) as if it had been a snake, he turned back in retreat, and retraced not his steps: O Moses!" (It was said), "Draw near, and fear not: for thou art of those who are secure.(3362)

3362 The verbal meaning is: 'you have nothing to fear from what appears to be a snake: it is a snake, not for you, but for Pharaoh." But there is a deeper meaning besides. Moses had now been called to a higher and spiritual mission. He had to meet the hatred of the Egyptians and circumvent their trickery and magic. He had now the security of Faith: in all dangers and difficulties Allah would guide and protect him, for he was actually in Allah's service, one of the Elect.

32. "Move thy hand into thy bosom, and it will come forth white without stain (or harm), and draw thy hand close to thy side (to guard) against fear.(3363) Those are the two credentials from thy Lord to Pharaoh and his Chiefs: for truly they are a people rebellious and wicked."

3363 Literally, "draw thy wing close to thy side, (away) from fear". When a bird is frightened, it ruffles its wings and prepares to fly away, but when it is calm and composed, it sits with its wings drawn close to its sides, showing a mind secure from danger: *Cf.* also n. 2550 to 20:22.

33. He said: "O my Lord! I have slain a man among them, and I fear(3364) lest they slay me.

3364 It is not that Moses is not reassured from all fear on account of the apparent snake which his rod had become, or from the sacred and unfamiliar surroundings in which he found himself. On this point his heart had been completely assured. But he is still new to his mission, and the future is obscure to his mind. Pharaoh was after him, to take his life, and apparently with good cause, because one of Pharaoh's men had been slain at his hands. And now he is commanded to go to Pharaoh and rebuke him and his Chiefs. The inner doubts and difficulties of his human mind he frankly lays before his Lord, and asks for a little human and visible support, which is granted him at once, *viz.:* the help of his brother Aaron.

34. "And my brother Aaron - He is more eloquent in speech than I: so send him with me as a helper, to confirm (and strengthen) me: for I fear that they may accuse me of falsehood."

35. He said: "We will certainly strengthen thy arm through thy brother, and invest you both with authority, so they shall not be able to(3365) touch you: with Our Sign shall ye triumph,- you two as well as those who follow you."(3366)

3365 *To touch you:* to approach you anywhere near, in the wonders and Signs that you will show them under the divine authority with which you are invested.

3366 The potency of Allah's Light is such that its divine rays reach the humblest of those who seek after Him. The Prophets can certainly work wonders, but their sincere followers in Faith can do so also in their own spheres. Wonders may appeal to people, but they are not the highest Signs of Allah's workings and they are around us every day in our lives.

36. When Moses came to them with Our clear signs, they said: "This is nothing but sorcery(3367) faked up: never did we head the like among our fathers of old!"(3368)

3367 This is what Moses was thinking of when he had said: "They may accuse me of falsehood". To accuse the purest Truth of lying is a favourite trick of those whose chief stock in trade is deception and sorcery and catching the attention of the vulgar by arts adapted to their ignorant minds!

3368 'As to this higher talk of the worship of the One true God, why, our ancestors have worshipped power and patronage, as concentrated in Pharaoh, from the most ancient times!'

37. Moses said: "My Lord knows best who it is that comes with guidance from Him and whose end will be best in the Hereafter: certain it is that the wrong-doers will not prosper."(3369)

3369 *Cf.* 6:135. The only argument in such a case is an appeal to Allah and to the ultimate Future. Both of these appeals require Faith. But even if you do not rely on anything so high, you can see that Falsehood or evils crystallised in ancestral customs are not going to do any one any good.

38. Pharaoh said: "O Chiefs! no god do I know for you(3370) but myself: therefore, O Haman! light me a (kiln to bake bricks) out of clay, and build me a lofty(3371) palace, that I may mount up to the god of Moses: but as far as I am concerned, I think (Moses) is a liar!"

3370 Pharaoh claimed, himself, to be God-not only one god among many, but the only god: "I am your Lord Most High": 79:24. At any rate he did not see why his people should worship any one but him.

3371 I understand his speech to his minister Hainan to be sarcastic. But some Commentators have taken it very seriously and imagined that he actually thought of reaching the heavens by building lofty towers *(Cf.* 40:36).

39. And he was arrogant and insolent in the land, beyond reason,- He and his hosts: they thought that they would not have to return to Us!(3372)

3372 They did not believe in the Hereafter. They did not understand that every deed must have its inevitable consequence, good, or evil, unless the Grace of Allah intervenes to save us from ourselves!

40. So We seized him and his hosts, and We flung them into the sea:(3373) Now behold what was the end of those who did wrong!

3373 Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned in the sea in their pursuit of the Israelites: see 7:130-136. They are the type of men who lead-only to Destruction. They invite, not to Peace and Happiness, but to the Fire of Wrath, mutual Envy, and Hatred.

41. And we made them (but) leaders inviting to the Fire; and on the Day of Judgment no help shall they find.

42. in this world We made a curse to follow them:(3374) And on the Day of Judgment they will be among the loathed (and despised).

3374 Power and patronage may be lauded by sycophants and selfish place-hunters; but when they are misused, and when their exposure causes their fall, they suffer ignominy even in this life. If they manage to escape exposure while alive, it often happens that they are found out after their death, and the curses of many generations follow those whose oppressions and wrongdoing spoiled the fair face of Allah's earth. But even this is nothing to the true Punishment that will come in the Hereafter. There, true values will be restored, and some of the highest and mightiest will be in the lowest depths of degradation.

43. We did reveal to Moses the Book after We had destroyed the earlier generations, (to give) Insight to men, and guidance and Mercy, that they might receive admonition.(3375)

3375 After the destruction of the Pharaonic Tyranny and other similar Tyrannies before them, Allah began a new age of Revelation, the age of Moses and his Book. Humanity began as it were with a clean slate again. It was a full Revelation (or *Shari'ah*) which may be looked at from three points of view: (1) as Light or Insight for men, so that they should not grope in darkness; (2) as a Guide to show them the Way, so that they should not be misled into wrong Paths; and (3) as a Mercy from Allah, so that by following the Way they may receive Allah's Forgiveness and Grace. In 6:91, we have a reference to Light and Guidance in connection with the Revelation of Moses, and in 6:154 we have a reference to Guidance and Mercy in the same connection. Here all three are combined, with the substitution of *Basa'ir fosr Nur. Basa'ir* is the plural of *Basirah,* and also be translated Proofs, as I have done in 6:104 *Cf.* also 7:203, n. 1175, where the word is translated "Lights".

44. Thou wast not on the Western(3376) side when We decreed the Commission to Moses, nor wast thou a witness (of those events).

3376 The Sinai Peninsula is in the northwest corner of Arabia . But the reference here is, I think, to the western side of the valley of liiwa. Mount Tur , where Moses received his prophetic commission, is on the western side of the valley.

45. But We raised up (new) generations, and long were the ages(3377) that passed over them; but thou wast not a dweller among the people of Madyan, rehearsing Our Signs to them; but it is We Who send messengers (with inspiration).(3378)

3377 That is, there were many generations that passed between Moses and the Prophet. Yet he knew by inspiration of the events of those times. Even if he had lived then, he could not have known the events that took place among the Midianites, except by inspiration, as he did not dwell among them.

3378 'Though thou was not among the Midianites, Our inspiration has told thee of the momentous events that took place among them when Moses was with them. This is itself a Sign that should make thy people understand.

46. Nor wast thou at the side of (the Mountain of) Tur when we called (to Moses). Yet (art thou sent) as Mercy from thy Lord, to give warning to a people(3379) to whom no warner had come before thee: in order that they may receive admonition.

3379 This people was Quraysh. 'Though thou didst not see how Moses was invested with the prophetic office at Mount Tur , thou hast had similar experience thyself, and We have sent thee to Quraysh to warn them of all their sins, and to repent and come into the Faith'.

47. If (We had) not (sent thee to the Quraish),- in case a calamity should seize them for (the deeds) that their hands have sent forth, they might say: "Our Lord! why didst Thou not(3380) sent us a messenger? We should then have followed Thy Signs and been amongst those who believe!"

3380 Now that a warner has co me among them with all the authority that previous Messengers possessed and with all the knowledge which can only come by divine inspiration, they have no excuse left whatever. They cannot say, "No warner came to us.' If any evil comes to them, as the inevitable result of their ill-deeds, they cannot blame Allah and say that they were not warned. *Cf.* 20:134.

48. But (now), when the Truth has come to them from Ourselves, they say, "Why are not (Signs) sent to him, like those which were sent to Moses?"(3381) Do they not then reject (the Signs) which were formerly sent to Moses? They say: "Two kinds of sorcery, each assisting the other!"(3382) And they say: "For us, we reject all (such things)!"

3381 When a Revelation is sent to them, in the Qur'an, adapted to all their needs and the needs of the time they live in, they hark back to antiquity. The Prophet was in many respects like Moses, but the times in which he lived were different from the times of Moses, and his age did not suffer from the deceptions of sorcery, like that of Moses. The remedies which his age and future ages required (for his Message was universal) were different. His miracle of the Qur'an was different and most permanent than the Rod and the Radiant- White Hand of Moses. But supposing that Quraysh had been humoured in their insincere demands, would they have believed? Did they believe in Moses? They were only put up by the jews to make objections which they themselves did not believe in.

3382 Moses was called a sorcerer by the Egyptians, and the wonderful words of the Qur'an were called sorcery by Quraysh. As the Qur'an confirmed the Message of Moses, Quraysh objectors said that they were in collusion. Quraysh did not believe in Allah's Revelation at all.

49. Say: "Then bring ye a Book from Allah, which is a better guide than either of them, that I may follow it! (do), if ye are truthful!"

50. But if they hearken not(3383) to thee, know that they only follow their own lusts: and who is more astray than one who follow his own lusts, devoid of guidance from Allah. for Allah guides not people given to wrong-doing.

3383 They were challenged to produce something better, to be a guide in life. But as they could not, it was evident that their objections were fractious. They were only following their own selfish lusts of power, monopoly, and exploitation of the poor and ignorant. How can such people receive guidance?

51. Now have We caused the Word to reach them themselves, in order that they may receive admonition.(3384)

3384 Before this Quraysh might have said that the Word of Allah had come to the Hebrews in their tongue or in Greek, which was used by the Hebrews in the time of Jesus. Now that Word is brought to *their* own doors, in their own Arabic tongue, by a man of their own race and family. Surely they have no excuse now for remaining strangers to the higher moral and spiritual law.

52. Those to whom We sent the Book before this,- they do believe in this (revelation):

53. And when it is recited to them, they say: "We believe therein, for it is the Truth from our Lord: indeed we have been Muslims (bowing to Allah.s Will) from before this.(3385)

3385 There were Christians and Jews who recognised that Islam was a logical and natural development of Allah's revelations as given in earlier ages, and they not only welcomed and accepted Islam, but claimed, and rightly, that they had always been Muslims. In that sense Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus had all been Muslims. (R).

54. Twice will they be given(3386) their reward, for that they have persevered, that they avert Evil with Good, and that they spend (in charity) out of what We have given them.

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55. And when they hear vain talk, they turn away therefrom and say: "To us our deeds, and to you yours;(3387) peace be to you: we seek not the ignorant."

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56. It is true thou wilt not be able to guide every one(3388) whom thou lovest; but Allah guides those whom He will and He knows best those who receive guidance.

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57. They say: "If we were to follow the guidance with thee, we should be snatched away(3389) from our land." Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary, to which are brought as tribute fruits of all kinds,- a provision from Ourselves? but most of them understand not.

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58. And how many populations We destroyed, which exulted in their life (of ease and plenty)! now those habitations of theirs, after them, are deserted,- All but a (miserable) few! and We are their heirs!(3390)

3390 A life of ease and plenty is nothing to boast of. Yet people or cities or civilisations grow insolently proud of such things. There were many such in the past, which are now mere names! Their very sites are deserted in most cases, or buried in the debris of ages. Indo-Pakistan subcontinent is full of such sites nearly everywhere. The sites of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro are the most ancient hitherto unearthed in Pakistan , and they are themselves in layers covering centuries of time! And how many more there may be, of which we do not know even names! Fatehpur-Sikri was a magnificent ruin within a single generation. And there are thousands of Qasbas once flourishing and now reduced to small villages or altogether deserted. But Allah is merciful and just. He does not destroy or degrade a people until they have had full opportunities of turning in repentance to Him and they have deliberately rejected His Law and continued in the practice of iniquity.

59. Nor was thy Lord the one to destroy a population until He had sent to its centre a messenger, rehearsing to them Our Signs; nor are We going to destroy a population except when its members practise iniquity.

60. The (material) things which ye are given are but the conveniences of this life and the glitter thereof;(3391) but that which is with Allah is better and more enduring: will ye not then be wise?

3391 The good things in this life have their uses and serve their convenience. But they are fleeting and their value is infinitely lower than that of Truth and Justice and Spiritual Well-being, the gifts which come as it were from the very Presence of Allah. No wise soul will be absorbed in the one and neglect the other, or will hesitate for a moment if it comes to a choice between them.

61. Are (these two) alike?- one to whom We have made a goodly promise, and who is going to reach its (fulfilment),(3392) and one to whom We have given the good things of this life, but who, on the Day of Judgment, is to be among those brought up (for punishment)?

3392 The two classes of people are: (1) those who have faith in the goodly promise of Allah to the righteous, and who are doing everything in life to reach the fulfilment of that promise, *i.e.,* those who believe and work righteousness, and (2) those who are ungrateful for such good things in this life as Allah has bestowed on them, by worshipping wealth or power or other symbols or idols of their fancy, *i.e.,* those who reject Faith and lead evil lives, for which they will have to answer in the Hereafter. The two classes are poles asunder, and their future is described below.

62. That Day ((Allah)) will call to them, and say "Where are my ´partners´?- whom ye imagined (to be such)?"

63. Those against whom the charge(3393) will be proved, will say: "Our Lord! These are the ones whom we led astray: we led them astray, as we were astray ourselves: we free ourselves (from them) in Thy presence: it was not us they worshipped."(3394)

3393 This and the next verse are concerned with the examination of those who neglected truth and righteousness and went after the worship of false gods, *viz.,* their own lusts. These were the "partners" they associated with Allah. Insofar as they were embodied in false or wicked leaders, the leaders will disown responsibility for them. 'We ourselves went wrong, and they followed our example, because it suited them: they worshipped, not us, but their own lusts' *(Cf. n.* 4017)

3394 *Cf.* 10:28 . False worship often names others, but really it is the worship of the Self. The others whom they name will have nothing to do with them when the awful Penalty stands in the sight of both. Then each wrongdoer will have to look to his own case. The wicked will then realise the gravity of the situation and wish that they had accepted the true guidance of Allah's Messengers.

64. It will be said (to them): "Call upon your ´partners´ (for help)" :they will call upon them, but they will not listen to them; and they will see the Penalty (before them); (how they will wish) ´if only they had been open to guidance!´

65. That Day (Allah) will(3395) call to them, and say: "What was the answer ye gave to the messengers?"

3395 Now we come to the examination of those who rejected or persecuted Allah's Messengers on the earth. It may be the same men as those mentioned in 28:62-64, but this is a different count in the charge.

66. Then the (whole) story that Day will seem obscure to them(3396) (like light to the blind) and they will not be able (even) to question each other.

3396 In their utter confusion and despair their minds will be blank. The past will seem to them unreal, and the present unintelligible, and they will not even be able to consult each other, as every one's state will be the same.

67. But any that (in this life) had repented, believed, and worked righteousness, will have hopes to be among those who achieve salvation.

68. Thy Lord does create and choose as He pleases:(3397) no choice have they (in the matter): Glory to Allah. and far is He above the partners they ascribe (to Him)!

3397 *As He pleases:* according to His own Will and Plan. Allah is not dependent on other people for advice or help. He has no partners. All creation is an act of His Will, and no one can direct Him how or why certain things should be, because He is supreme in wisdom and knowledge. He chooses His messengers also by His own unfettered choice. Inspiration or spiritual knowledge and dignity cannot be judged by our relative or temporary standards. Worldly greatness or even wisdom do not necessarily go with spiritual insight.

69. And thy Lord knows all that their hearts conceal and all that they reveal.(3398)

3398 Men may form all sorts of vain wishes or conceal their designs. But Allah's Will is supreme, and nothing can withstand its fulfilment.

70. And He is Allah. There is no god but He. To Him be praise, at the first and at the last: for Him is the Command, and to Him shall ye (all) be brought back.

71. Say: See ye? If Allah were to make the Night(3399) perpetual over you to the Day of Judgment, what god is there other than Allah, who can give you enlightenment? Will ye not then hearken?

3399 In the physical world the Night and Day are both blessings, the one for rest and the other for work, and the alternation itself is one of the mercies of Allah, and none but He can give us these blessings. If we were perpetually resting, or screened from the light, our faculties would be blunted and we should be worse than dead. If we were perpetually working, we should be tired, and we should also be dead in another way. This daily miracle keeps us alive and prepares us, in this our probationary life, for our final destiny in the Hereafter. So in the spiritual world. Some kinds of ignorance-such as ignorance of what is coming in the future-are necessary to conserve our powers and give rest to our minds and spirits, but if

we were to remain ignorant perpetually, we should be spiritually dead. In the same way our spiritual strivings require periodical alternations to rest in the form of attention to our temporal concerns: hence the justification of a good and pure life on the plane of this earth also. Also, in the world's history, there are periods when a living messenger stimulates intense spiritual activity, and periods when it is comparatively quiescent (the so-called Dark Ages); but both are examples of the working of Allah's Plan of wisdom and mercy. But this applies only up to the Day of Judgement. After that we shall be on another plane altogether.

72. Say: See ye? If Allah were to make the day perpetual over you to the Day of Judgment, what god is there other than Allah, who can give you a night in which ye can rest? Will ye not then see?(3400)

3400 Inverse 71 was mentioned a "perpetual Night," for which the faculty of "hearkening" was appropriate, as all light was shut out. In this verse a perpetual Day is mentioned, for which the faculty of "seeing" is appropriate. Through many doors can the higher knowledge enter our souls. Shall we not use each of them as the occasion demands?

73. It is out of His Mercy that He has made for you Night and Day,- that ye may rest therein, and that ye may seek of his Grace;- and in order that ye may be grateful.

74. The Day that He will(3401) call on them, He will say: "Where are my ´partners´? whom ye imagined (to be such)?"

3401 *Cf.* 28:62 above. The reminiscence of the words closes and rounds off the argument of this Section.

75. And from each people shall We draw a witness,(3402) and We shall say: "Produce your Proof": then shall they know that the Truth is in Allah (alone), and the (lies) which they invented will leave them in the lurch.(3403)

3402 *Cf.* 4:41 . The Prophet from each People or Nation will bear testimony that he preached the true gospel of Unity, and the People who rejected him will be asked to show the Proof or authority on which they rejected him: *Cf.* 2:111.

3403 In that new world, Allah will be the only Truth or Reality, and all the fancies or lies, which had been invented in this world of reflected or relative truths mixed with illusions, will have vanished, and left those who relied on them in the lurch. *Cf.* 6:24 .

76. Qarun was doubtless,(3404) of the people of Moses; but he acted insolently towards them: such were the treasures We(3405) had bestowed on him that their very keys would have been a burden to a body of strong men:(3406) Behold, his people said to him: "Exult not, for Allah loveth not those who exult (in riches).

3404 Qarun is identified with the Korah of the English Bible. His story is told in Num. 16:1-35. He and his followers, numbering 250 men, rose in rebellion against Moses and Aaron, on the ground that their position and fame in the congregation entitled them to equality in spiritual matters with the Priests-that they were as holy as any, and they claimed to burn incense at the sacred Altar reserved for the Priests. They had an exemplary punishment: "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods: they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation."

3405 Qarun's boundless wealth is described in the Midrashim, or the Jewish compilations based on the oral teachings of the Synagogues, which however exaggerate the weight of the keys to be the equivalent of the load of 300 mules!

3406 ' *Us bah:* a body of men, here used indefinitely. It usually implies a body of 10 to 40 men. The old-fashioned keys were big and heavy, and if there were hundreds of treasure chests, the keys must have been a great weight. As they were travelling in the desert, the treasures were presumably left behind in Egypt , and only the keys were carried. The disloyal Qarun had left his heart in Egypt , with his treasures.

77. "But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter,(3407) nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief."

3407 That is, 'spend your wealth in charity and good works. It is Allah Who has given it to you, and you should spend it in Allah's cause. Nor should you forget the legitimate needs of this life, as misers do, and most people become misers who think too exclusively of their wealth. If wealth is not used properly, there are three evils that follow: (1) its possessor may be a miser and forget all claims due to himself and those about him; (2) he may forget the higher needs of the poor and needy, or the good causes which require support; and (3) he may even misspend on occasions and cause a great deal of harm and mischief.' Apparently Qarun had all three vices.

78. He said: "This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge which I have."(3408) Did he not know that Allah had destroyed, before him, (whole) generations,- which were superior to him in strength and greater in the amount (of riches) they had collected? but the wicked are not called (immediately) to account(3409) for their sins.

3408 He was so blind and arrogant that he thought that his own merit, knowledge, and skill or cleverness had earned him his wealth, and that now, on account of it, he was superior to everybody else and was entitled to ride rough-shod over them. Fool!-he was soon pulled up by Allah.

3409 Even Qarun was given a long run of enjoyment with his fabulous wealth before he had to be removed for the mischief he was doing.

79. So he went forth among his people in the (pride of his wordly) glitter. Said those whose aim is the Life of this World: "Oh! that we had the like of what Qarun has got! for he is truly a lord of mighty good fortune!"(3410)

3410 When he was in the hey-day of his glory, worldly people envied him and thought how happy they would be if they were in his place. Not so the people of wisdom and discernment. They knew a more precious and lasting wealth, which is described in the next verse.

80. But those who had been granted (true) knowledge said: "Alas for you! The reward of Allah (in the Hereafter) is best for those who believe and work righteousness: but this none shall attain, save those who steadfastly persevere (in good)."

81. Then We caused the earth(3411) to swallow up him and his house; and he had not (the least little) party to help him against Allah, nor could he defend himself.

3411 Seen. 3404 above. *Cf.* also 16:45 and n. 2071. Besides the obvious moral in the literal interpretation of the story, that material wealth is fleeting and may be a temptation and a cause of fall, there are some metaphorical implications that occur to me. (1) Qarun was with Israel in the wilderness, even his material wealth was of no use to him there; he had the mere empty keys; material wealth has no value in itself, but only a relative and local value. (2) In body he was with Israel in the wilderness, but his heart was in Egypt with its fertility and its slavery. Such is the case of many hypocrites, who like to be seen in righteous company but whose thoughts, longings, and doings are inconsistent with such company. (3) There is no good in this life but comes from Allah. To think otherwise is to set up a false god besides Allah. Our own merits are so small that they should never be the object of our idolatry. (4) If Qarun on account of his wealth was setting himself up in rivalry with Moses and Aaron, he was blind to the fact that spiritual knowledge is far above any little cleverness in worldly affairs. Mob-leaders have no position before spiritual guides.

82. And those who had envied his position the day before began to say on the morrow: "Ah! it is indeed Allah Who enlarges the provision(3412) or restricts it, to any of His servants He pleases! had it not been that Allah was gracious to us, He could have caused the earth to swallow us up! Ah! those who reject Allah will assuredly never prosper."

3412 *Provision* or Sustenance, both literally and figuratively: wealth and material things in life as well as the things that sustain our higher and spiritual faculties. The rabble, that admired Qarun's wealth when he was in worldly prosperity, now sees the other side of the question and understands that there are other gifts more precious and desirable, and that these may actually be withheld from men who enjoy wealth and worldly prosperity. In fact it is false prosperity, or no prosperity

in the real sense of the word, which is without spiritual well-being (*Cf.* 29:17, 30:37, and 39:52).

83. That Home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high- handedness or mischief on earth:(3413) and the end is (best) for the righteous.

3413 *High-handedness* or arrogance, as opposed to submission to the Will of Allah, Islam. *Mischief,* as opposed to doing good, bringing forth fruits of righteousness. It is the righteous who will win in the end.

84. If any does good, the reward to him is better than his deed; but if any does evil, the doers of evil are only punished (to the extent) of their deeds.(3414)

3414 A good deed has its sure reward, and that reward will be better than the merits of the doer. An evil deed may be forgiven by repentance, but in any case will not be punished with severer penalty than justice demands (*Cf.* 18:30 and 36:54).

85. Verily He Who ordained(3415) the Qur´an for thee, will bring thee back to the Place(3416) of Return. Say: "My Lord knows best who it is that brings true guidance, and who is in manifest error."(3417)

3415 That is: order in His wisdom and mercy that the Qur'an should be revealed, containing guidance for conduct in this life and the next, and further ordered that it should be read out and taught and its principles observed in practice. It is because of this teaching and preaching that the Holy Prophet was persecuted, but as Allah sent the Qur'an, He will see that those who follow it will not eventually suffer, but be restored to happiness in the Place of Return, for which see next note.

3416 *Place of Return:* (1) a tide of Makkah; (2) the occasion when we shall be restored to the Presence of our Lord. It is said that this verse was revealed *at J uhfa,* on the road from Makkah to Madinah, a short distance from Makkah, on the Hijrah journey. The Prophet was sad at heart, and this was given as consolation to him. If this was the particular occasion, the general meaning would refer the Place of Return to the occasion of the Resurrection, when all true values will be restored, however they may be disturbed by the temporary interference of Evil in this life.

3417 Allah knows the true from the false, and if we are persecuted for our Faith and attacked or spoken ill of because we dare to do right, our surest refuge is an appeal to Allah rather than to men.

86. And thou hadst not expected that the Book would be sent to thee except as a Mercy from thy Lord:(3418) Therefore lend not thou support in any way to those who reject (Allah´s Message).(3419)

3418 Revelation and the preaching of Truth may in the beginning bring persecution, conflict, and sorrow in its train; but in reality it is the truest mercy from Allah, which comes even without our expecting it, as it came to the Prophets without their consciously asking for it. This is proved in the history of Moses related in this Surah, and the history of the Holy Prophet which it is meant to illustrate.

3419 If Allah's Message is unpalatable to Evil and is rejected by it, those who accept it may (in their natural human feelings) sometimes wonder that such should be the case, and whether it is really Allah's Will that the conflict which ensues should be pursued. Any such hesitation would lend unconscious support to the aggressions of evil and should be discarded. The servant of Allah stands forth boldly as his *Mujahid* (fighter of the good fight), daring all, and knowing that Allah is behind him.

87. And let nothing keep thee back from the Signs of Allah after they have been revealed to thee: and invite (men) to thy Lord, and be not of the company of those who join gods with Allah.(3420)

3420 The soldier of Allah, having taken up the fight against Evil, and knowing that he is in touch with the true Light, never yields an inch of ground. He is always to the fore in inviting others to his own ranks, but he himself refuses to be with those who worship anything else but Allah.

88. And call not, besides Allah, on another god. There is no god but He. Everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face.(3421) To Him belongs the Command, and to Him will ye (all) be brought back.

3421 This sums up the lesson of the whole Surah. The only Eternal Reality is Allah. The whole phenomenal world is subject to flux and change and will pass away, but He will endure forever. (R).



29. Al 'Ankabut (The Spider)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A.L.M.(3422)

3422 For these Abbreviated Letters see n. 25 to 2:1. We are asked to contrast, in our present life the real inner life against the outer life, and learn from the past about the struggles of the soul which uphold Allah's Truth, against the environment of evil which resists it, and to turn our thoughts to the *Ma'ad,* or man's future destiny in the Hereafter.

2. Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe",(3423) and that they will not be tested?

3423 Mere lip profession of Faith is not enough. It must he tried and tested in the real turmoil of life. The test will be applied in all kinds of circumstances, in individual life and in relation to the environment around us, to see whether we can strive constantly and put Allah above Self. Much pain, sorrow, and self-sacrifice may be necessary, not because they are good in themselves, but because they will purify' us, like fire applied to a goldsmith's crucible to burn out the dross.

3. We did test those before them, and Allah will certainly know(3424) those who are true from those who are false.

3424 The word "know" is used here more in the sense of testing than of acquiring knowledge. Allah is All-Knowing: He needs no test to increase His own knowledge, but the test is to burn out the dross within ourselves, as explained in the last note.

4. Do those who practise evil think that they will get the better of Us? Evil is their judgment!(3425)

3425 If the enemies of Truth imagine that they will "be first" by destroying Truth before it takes root, they are sadly at fault, for their own persecution may help to plant Allah's Truth more firmly in men's hearts.

5. For those whose hopes are in the meeting with Allah(3426) (in the Hereafter, let them strive); for the term (appointed) by Allah is surely coming(3427) and He hears and knows (all things).

3426 The men of Faith look forward to Allah. Their quest is Allah, and the object of their hopes is the meeting with Allah. They should strive with might

and main to serve Him in this life, for this life is short, and the Term appointed for their probation will soon be over.

3427 The Term *(ajal)* may signify: (1) the time appointed for death, which ends the probation of this life; (2) the time appointed for this life, so that we can prepare for the Hereafter; the limit will soon expire. In either case the ultimate meaning is the same. We must strive *now* and not postpone anything for the future. And we must realise and remember that every prayer we make to Allah is heard by Him, and mat every unspoken wish or motive of our heart, good or bad, is known to Him, and goes to swell our spiritual account.

6. And if any strive (with might and main), they do so for their own souls:(3428) for Allah is free of all needs from all creation.

3428 All our striving ensures to our own spiritual benefit. When we speak of serving Allah, it is not that we confer any benefit on Him. For He has no needs, and is independent of all His Creation *(Cf.* 14:8). In conforming to His Will, we are seeking our own good, as in yielding to evil we are doing harm to ourselves.

7. Those who believe and work righteous deeds,- from them shall We blot out all evil (that may be) in them,(3429) and We shall reward them according to the best of their deeds.

3429 In striving to purify our Faith and Life, we are enabled to avoid the consequences of our misdeeds for Allah will forgive any evil in our past, purify any tendencies towards evil which we may have inherited from that past, and help to the attainment of a Future based on the best of what we have done rather than on the poor average of our own merits. The atonement or expiation is by Allah's Mercy, not by our merits or the merits or sacrifices of anyone else *(Cf.* 46:16). (R).

8. We have enjoined on man kindness to parents: but if they (either of them) strive (to force) thee to join with Me (in worship) anything of which thou hast no knowledge,(3430) obey them not. Ye have (all) to return to me, and I will tell you (the truth) of all that ye did.(3431)

3430 That is, no certainty, in virtue of the spiritual light. In matters of faith and worship, even parents have no right to force their children. They cannot and must not hold up before them any worship but that of the One True God.

3431 Children and parents must all remember that they all have to go before Allah's tribunal, and answer, each for his own deeds. In cases where one set of people have lawful authority over another set of people (as in the case of parents and children), and the two differ in important matters like that of Faith, the latter are justified in rejecting authority: the apparent conflict will be solved when the whole truth is revealed to all eyes in the Final Judgement. *(Cf.* 31:14-15 and 46:15).

9. And those who believe and work righteous deeds,- them shall We admit to the company of the Righteous.(3432)

3432 The picking up again of the words which began verse 7 above shows that the same subject is now pursued from another aspect. The expiation or reward which was first spoken of is not so much a tangible thing as a restoration of status. The striving in righteous deeds will restore fallen man to the society of the Righteous-the ideal Fellowship described in 4:69 and n. 586.

10. Then there are among men such as say, "We believe in Allah.; but when they suffer affliction in (the cause of) Allah, they treat men´s oppression as if it were the Wrath of Allah. And if help comes (to thee) from thy Lord, they are sure to say,(3433) "We have (always) been with you!" Does not Allah know best all that is in the hearts of all creation?

3433 *Cf.* 9:56 , and other passages where the cunning of the Hypocrites is exposed. The man who turns away from Faith in adversity and only claims the friendship of the Faithful when there is something to be gained by it, is worthy of a double condemnation: first because he rejected Faith and Truth, and secondly because he falsely pretended to be one of those whom he feared or hated in his heart. But nothing in all Creation is concealed from Allah.

11. And Allah most certainly knows those who believe, and as certainly those who are Hypocrites.(3434)

3434 *Cf.* 29:3 above. The general opposition between Truth and Falsehood is now brought down to the specific case of the Hypocrites, who are against the Faith when struggling but swear friendship with it when it seems to be gaining ground. The argument is rounded off with the next two verses.

12. And the Unbelievers say to those who believe: "Follow our path, and we will bear (the consequences)(3435) of your faults." Never in the least will they bear their faults: in fact they are liars!

3435 Besides the hypocrite there is another type of man who openly scoffs at Faith. 'Take life as we take it,' he says: 'we shall bear your sins.' As if they could! Each soul bears its own burdens, and no one else can bear them. The principle also applies to the type of man who preaches vicarious atonement, for, if followed to its logical conclusion, it means both injustice and irresponsibility, and puts quite a different complexion on the nature of sin.

13. They will bear their own burdens, and (other) burdens along with their own,(3436) and on the Day of Judgments they will be called to account for their falsehoods.

3436 Besides the burdens of their own infidelity, they will bear the burden of deluding others with falsehood.

14. We (once) sent Noah to his people, and he tarried among them a thousand years(3437) less fifty: but the Deluge overwhelmed them while they (persisted in) sin.

3437 The story of Noah and his Flood is not told here. It is told in other places: *e.g.,* see 11:25 -48 or 26:105-122- His only referred to here to point out that Noah's period lasted a long time, 950 years. *(Cf.* Gen. 9:28-29, where his whole age is declared to have been 950 years, of which 350 years were after the Flood). In spite of this long period, his contemporaries failed to listen, and they were destroyed but the story of the Ark remains an everlasting Sign and Warning to mankind-a Sign of deliverance to the righteous and of destruction to the wicked.

15. But We saved him and the companions of the Ark, and We made the (Ark) a Sign for all peoples!

16. And (We also saved) Abraham: behold, he said(3438) to his people, "Serve Allah and fear Him: that will be best for you- If ye understand!

3438 The story of Abraham has been told in various phases in different passages. The ones most germane to the present passage are: 21:51-72 (his being cast into the fire and being saved from it); and 19:41 -50 (his voluntary exile from the home of his fathers). Here the story is not told but is referred to in order to stress the following points; (1) Abraham's people only responded to his preaching by threatening to burn him (29:16-18, 24); (2) evil consorts with evil but will have a rude awakening (29:25); (3) the good adhere to the good, and are blessed (29:26-27). Note that the passage 29:19-23 is a parenthetical comment, though some Commentators treat a portion of it as part of Abraham's speech.

17. "For ye do worship idols besides Allah, and ye invent falsehood. The things that ye worship besides Allah have no power to give you sustenance: then seek ye sustenance(3439) from Allah, serve Him, and be grateful to Him: to Him will be your return.

3439 *Sustenance:* in the symbolic as well as the literal sense. Seek from Allah all that is necessary for your upkeep and development, and for preparing you for your future Destiny. Lay all your hopes in Him and in no one else. Dedicate yourselves to His worship. He will give you all that is necessary for your growth and well being, and you should show your gratitude to Him by conforming your will entirely to His (*Cf.* n. 3412).

18. "And if ye reject (the Message), so did generations before you: and the duty of the messenger is only to preach publicly (and clearly)."

19. See they not how Allah originates creation, then(3440) repeats it: truly that is easy for Allah.

3440 The originating of creation is the creation of primeval matter. The repetition of the process of creation goes on constantly, for at every moment new processes are being called into being by the creative power of Allah, and according to His Laws. And the final creation as far as man is concerned will be in the *Ma'ad,* when the whole world as man sees it will be entirely newly created on a different plane. As far as Allah is concerned, there is nothing final-no first and last, for He is infinite. He was before our First and will be after our Last, and if there is any meaning in these relative terms, He is the real First and the real Last.

20. Say: "Travel through the earth(3441) and see how Allah did originate creation; so will Allah produce a later creation: for Allah has power over all things.

3441 *Travel through the earth:* again, literally as well as symbolically. If we actually go through this wide earth, we shall see the wonderful things in His Creation—the Grand Canyon and the Niagaras in North America, beautiful harbours like that at Sydney in Australia, mountains like Fujiyama, the Himalayas, and Elburz in Asia, the Nile with its wonderful cataracts in Africa, the Fiords of Norway, the Geysers of Iceland, the city of the midnight sun in Tromsoe, and innumerable wonders everywhere. But wonders upon wonders are disclosed in the constitution of matter itself, the atom, and the forces of energy, as also in the instincts of animals, and the minds and capacities of man. And there is no limit to these things. Worlds upon worlds are created and transformed every moment, within and presumably beyond man's vision. From what we know we can judge of the unknown.

21. "He punishes whom He pleases, and He grants Mercy to whom He pleases, and towards Him are ye turned.(3442)

3442 I think *ilayhi tuqlabun* is better translated "towards Him are ye turned" than "towards Him will be your return", as it implies not only the return of man to Allah in the Hereafter *(turja'un* in verse 17 above) but also the fact explained in verse 22 that man's needs are always to be obtained from Allah: man cannot frustrate Allah's designs, and can have no help or protection except from Allah: man has always to face Allah, whether man obeys Allah or tries to ignore Allah. Man will never be able to defeat Allah's Plan. According to His wise Will and Plan, He will grant His grace or withhold it from man.

22. "Not on earth nor in heaven will ye be able (fleeing) to frustrate (his Plan), nor have ye, besides Allah, any protector or helper."

23. Those who reject the Signs of Allah and the Meeting with Him (in the Hereafter),- it is they who shall despair of My Mercy: it is they(3443) who will (suffer) a most grievous Penalty.

3443 The emphasis is on *"they" (ula'ika).* It is only the people who ignore or reject Allah's signs and reject a Hereafter, that will find themselves in dispair and suffering. Allah's mercy is open to all, but if any reject His Mercy, they must suffer.

24. So naught was the answer of (Abraham´s) people except that they said: "Slay him or burn him." But Allah did save him from the Fire.(3444) Verily in this are Signs for people who believe.

3444 See 21:66-70. Abraham was cast into the fire, but he was unhurt, by the grace of Allah. So righteous people suffer no harm from the plots of the wicked. But they must leave the environment of evil even if they have to forsake their ancestral home, as Abraham did.

25. And he said: "For you, ye have taken (for worship) idols besides Allah, out of mutual love and regard(3445) between yourselves in this life; but on the Day of Judgment ye shall disown each other and curse each other: and your abode will be the Fire, and ye shall have none to help."

3445 In sin and wickedness there is as much log-rolling as in politics. Evil men humour each other and support each other; they call each other's vice by high-sounding names. They call it mutual regard or friendship or love; at the lowest, they call it toleration. Perhaps they flourish in this life by such arts. But they deceive themselves, and they decehe each other. What will be their relations in the Hereafter? They will disown each other when each has to answer on the principle of personal responsibility. Each will accuse the others of misleading him, and they will curse each other. But there will then be no help, and they must suffer in the Fire.

26. But Lut had faith in Him:(3446) He said: "I will leave home for the sake of my Lord: for He is Exalted in Might, and Wise."

3446 Lut was a nephew of Abraham. He adhered to Abraham's teaching and faith and accepted voluntary exile with him, for Abraham left the home of his fathers in Chaldaea arid migrated to Syria and Palestine , where Allah gave him increase and prosperity, and a numerous family, who upheld the flag of Unity and the Light of Allah.

27. And We gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and ordained among his progeny Prophethood(3447) and Revelation, and We granted him his reward in this life; and he was in the Hereafter (of the company) of the Righteous.(3448)

3447 Isaac was Abraham's son and Jacob his grandson, and among his progeny was included Isma'il the eldest son of Abraham. Each of these became a fountainhead of Prophecy and Revelation. Isaac and Jacob through Moses, and Isma'il through the Prophet Muhammad. Jacob got the name of " Israel " at Bethel : Gen. 32:28; and 35:10, and his progeny got the title of "The Children of Israel".

3448 *Cf.* 29:9, and 4:69, n. 586.

28. And (remember) Lut: behold, he said to his people: "Ye do commit lewdness, such as no people in Creation(3449) (ever) committed before you.

3449 *Cf.* 7:80. A discreet reference is made to their unspeakable crimes, which were against the laws of nature.

29. "Do ye indeed approach men, and cut off the highway?-(3450) and practise wickedness (even) in your councils?" But his people gave no answer but this: they said: "Bring us the Wrath of Allah if thou tellest the truth."(3451)

3450 They infested highways and committed their horrible crimes not only secretly, but openly and publicly, even in their assemblies. Some Commentators understand "cutting off the highway" to refer to highway robberies; this is possible, and it is also possible that the crimes in their assemblies may have been injustice, rowdiness, etc. But the context seems to refer to their own special horrible crime, and the point here seems to be that they were not ashamed of it and that they practised it publicly. Degradation could go no further.

3451 This is another instance of their effrontery, in addition to that mentioned in 7:82: the two supplement each other. Here the point emphasised is that they did not believe in Allah or His Punishment, and dared Allah's Prophet Lut to bring about the Punishment if he could. And it did come and destroy them.

30. He said: "O my Lord! help Thou me against people who do mischief!"

31. When Our Messengers came to Abraham with the good news,(3452) they said: "We are indeed going to destroy the people of this township:(3453) for truly they are (addicted to) crime."

3452 See 11:69-76. The angels, who were coming on the mission to destroy the people who were polluting the earth with their crimes, called on their way on Abraham to give the good news of the birth of a son to him in his old age. When they told him their destination, he feared for his nephew who he knew was there. They reassured him and then came on to Lut

3453 By translating "township" I imply the two neighbouring populations of Sodom and Gomorrah , who had already gone too far in their crime, their shamelessness, and their defiance, to profit by any mercy from Allah.

32. He said: "But there is Lut there." They said: "Well do we know who is there : we will certainly save him and his following,- except his wife: she is of those who lag behind!"(3454)

3454 She was not loyal to her husband. Tradition says that she belonged to the wicked people, and was not prepared to leave them. She had no faith in the mission either of her husband or of the angels who had come as his guests.

33. And when Our Messengers came to Lut, he was grieved on their account, and felt himself powerless(3455) (to protect) them: but they said: "Fear thou not, nor grieve: we are (here) to save thee and thy following, except thy wife: she is of those who lag behind.

3455 This part of the story may be read in greater detail in 11:77-83.

34. "For we are going to bring down on the people of this township a Punishment(3456) from heaven, because they have been wickedly rebellious."

3456 The Punishment was a rain of brimstone, which completely overwhelmed the Cities, with possibly an earthquake and a volcanic eruption (see 11:82).

35. And We have left thereof an evident Sign,(3457) for any people who (care to) understand.

3457 The whole tract on the east side of the Dead Sea (where the Cities were situated) is covered with sulphurous salts and is deadly to animal and plant life. The Dead Sea itself is called in Arabic the Bahr Lut (the sea of Lot). It is a scene of utter desolation, that should stand as a Symbol of the Destruction that awaits Sin.

36. To the Madyan (people) (We sent) their brother Shu´aib. Then he said: "O my people! serve Allah, and fear the Last Day: nor commit evil on the earth, with intent to do mischief."

37. But they rejected him: Then the mighty Blast(3458) seized them, and they lay prostrate in their homes by the morning.

3458 The story of Shu'ayb and the Madyan people is only referred to here. It is told in 11:84-95. Their besetting sin was fraud and commercial immorality. Their punishment was a mighty Blast, such as accompanies volcanic eruptions. The point of the reference here is that they went about doing mischief on the earth, and never thought of the *Ma'ad or* the Hereafter, the particular theme of this Surah. The same point is made by the brief references in the following two verses to the 'Ad and the Thamud, and to Qarun, Pharaoh, and Haman, though the besetting sin in each case was different. The Midianites were a commercial people and trafficked from land to land; their frauds are well described as spreading "mischief on the earth".

38. (Remember also) the ´Ad and the Thamud (peoples):(3459) clearly will appear to you from (the traces) of their buildings (their fate): the Evil One made their deeds alluring(3460) to them, and kept them back from the Path, though they were gifted with intelligence and skill.

3459 For 'Ad people see 7:65-72, and n. 1040, and for Thamud, 7:73-79, and n. 1043. The remains of their buildings show (1) that they were gifted with great intelligence and skill; (2) that they were proud of their material civilisation; and (3) their destruction argues how the greatest material civilisation and resources cannot save a People who disobey Allah's moral law.

3460 They were so arrogant and self-satisfied, that they missed the higher purpose of life, and strayed clean away from the Path of Allah. Though their intelligence should have kept them straight, Evil made them crooked and led them and kept them astray.

39. (Remember also) Qarun,(3461) Pharaoh, and Haman: there came to them Moses with Clear Signs, but they behaved with insolence on the earth; yet they could not overreach (Us).

3461 For Qarun see 28:76-82; Pharaoh is mentioned frequently in the Qur'an, but he is mentioned in association with Raman in 28:6; for their blasphemous arrogance and defiance of Allah see 28:38. They thought such a lot of themselves, but they came to an evil end.

40. Each one of them We seized for his crime: of them, against some We sent a violent tornado (with showers(3462) of stones); some were caught by a (mighty) Blast;(3463) some We caused the earth(3464) to swallow up; and some We drowned (in the waters):(3465) It was not Allah Who injured (or oppressed) them:" They injured (and oppressed) their own souls.

3462 For *hasib* (violent tornado with showers of stones), see 17:68: this punishment as inflicted on the Cities of the Plain, to which Lot preached (54:34). Some Commentators think that this also applied to 'Ad, but their punishment is described as by a violent and unseasonable cold wind (41:16; 54:19 and 69:6), such as blows in sand storms in the Ahqaf, the region of shifting sands which was in their territory.

3463 For *sayhah* (Blast) see 11:67 and n. 1561, as also n. 1047 to 7:78 and n. 1996 to 15:73. This word is used in describing the fate of: Thamud (11:67) Madyan (11:94); the population to which Lut preached (15:73); and the Hijr (15:83), part of the territory of Thamud ; also in the Parable of the City to which came the three Prophets, who found a single believer (36:29).

3464 This was the fate of Qarun: see 28:81. *Cf.* also 16:45 and n. 2071.

3465 This was the fate of the hosts of Pharaoh and Haman (28:40) as well as the wicked generation of Noah (26:120).

41. The parable of those who take protectors other than Allah is that of the spider, who builds (to itself) a house; but truly the flimsiest of houses(3466) is the spider´s house;-(3467) if they but knew.

3466 The Spider's house is one of the wonderful Signs of Allah's creation. It is made up of fine silk threads spun out of silk glands in the spider's body. There are many kinds of spiders and many kinds of spider houses. Two main types of houses may be mentioned. There is the tubular nest or web, a silk-lined house or burrow with one or two trap doors. This may be called his residential or family mansion. Then there is what is ordinarily called a spider's web, consisting of a central point with radiating threads running in all directions and acting as tie-beams to the quasi- circular concentric threads that form the body of the web. This is his hunting box. The whole structure exemplifies economy in time, material, and strength. If an insect is caught in the net, the vibration set up in the radiating threads is at once communicated to the spider, who can come and kill his prey. In case the prey is powerful, the spider is furnished with poison glands with which to kill his prey. The spider sits either in the centre of the web or hides on the underside of a leaf or in some crevice, but he always has a single thread connecting him with his web, to keep him in telephonic communication. The female spider is much bigger than the male, and in Arabic the generic gender of *'Ankabut* is feminine.

3467 Most of the facts in the last note can be read into the Parable. For their thickness, the spider's threads are very strong from the point of view of relativity, but in our actual world they are flimsy, especially the threads of the gossamer spider floating in the air. So is the house and strength of the man who relies on material resources however fine or beautiful relatively; before the eternal Reality they are as nothing. The spider's most cunning architecture cannot stand against a wave of man's hand. His poison glands are like the hidden poison in our beautiful worldly plants which may take various shapes but have seeds of death in them.

42. Verily Allah doth know of (every thing) whatever(3468) that they call upon besides Him: and He is Exalted (in power), Wise.

3468 The last verse told us that men, out of spiritual ignorance, build their hopes on flimsy unsubstantial things (like the spider's web) which are broken by a thousand chance attacks of wind and weather or the actions of animals or men. If they cannot fully grasp their own good, they should seek His Light. To Him everything is known—men's frailty, their false hopes, their questionable motives, the false gods whom they enthrone in their midst, the mischief done by the neglect of Truth, and the way out for those who have entangled themselves in the snares of Evil. He is All-Wise and is able to carry out all He wills, and they should turn to Him.

43. And such are the Parables We set forth for mankind, but only those understand them who have Knowledge.(3469)

3469 Parables seem simple things, but their profound meaning and application can only be understood by those who seek knowledge and by Allah's grace attain it.

44. Allah created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions):(3470) verily in that is a Sign for those who believe.

3470 *Cf.* 6:73 and n. 896. In all Allah's Creation, not only is there evidence of intelligent Purpose, fitting all parts together with wisdom, but also of supreme Goodness and cherishing Care, by which all needs are satisfied and all the highest and truest cravings fulfilled. These are like beckoning signals to lead on those who pray and search in Faith, those who with the most intense desire of their soul can pray, as in Cardinal Newman's Hymn, "Lead, kindly Light! Amid the encircling gloom, lead Thou me on!"

45. Recite what is sent(3471) of the Book by inspiration to thee, and establish regular Prayer: for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt. And Allah knows the (deeds) that ye do.

3471 The *tilawat of* the Qur'an implies: (1) rehearsing or reciting it, and publishing it abroad to the world; (2) reading it to ourselves; (3) studying it to understand it as it should be studied and understood (2:121); (4) meditating on it so as to accord our knowledge and life and desires with it. When this is done, it merges into real Prayer, and Prayer purges us of anything (act, plan, thought, motive, words) of which we should be ashamed or which would work injustice to others. Such Prayer passes into our inmost life and being, for then we realise the Presence of Allah, and that is true *dhikr* (or remembrance), for remembrance is the bringing to mind of things as present to us which might otherwise be absent to us. And that is the greatest thing in life. It is subjective to us: it fills our consciousness with Allah. For Allah is in any case always present and knows all.

46. And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better(3472) (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury):(3473) but say, "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)."(3474)

3472 Mere disputations are futile. In order to achieve our purpose as true standard-bearers for Allah, we shall have to find true common grounds of belief, as stated in the latter part of this verse, and also to show by our urbanity, kindness, sincerity, truth, and genuine anxiety, for the good of others, that we are not cranks or merely seeking selfish or questionable aims.

3473 Of course those who are deliberately trying to wrong or injure others will have to be treated firmly, as we are guardians of each other. With them, there is little question of finding common ground or exercising patience, until the injury is prevented or stopped.

3474 That is, the religion of all true and sincere men of Faith is, or should be, one; and that is the ideal of Islam.

47. And thus(3475) (it is) that We have sent down the Book to thee. So the People of the Book believe therein,(3476) as also do some of these(3477) (pagan Arabs): and none but Unbelievers reject our signs.

3475 It is in this spirit that all true Revelation comes from Allah. Allah is One, and His Message cannot come in one place or at one time to contradict His Message in another place or at another time in spirit, though there may be local variations according to the needs or understanding of men at any given time or place -

3476 The sincere Jews and Christians found in the Holy Prophet a fulfillment of their own religion. For the names of some Jews who recognised and embraced Islam, see n. 3227 to 26:197. Among the Christians, too, the Faith slowly won ground. Embassies were sent by the Holy Prophet in the 6th and 7th years of the Hijrah to all the principal countries around Arabia, *viz.,* the capital of the Byzantine Empire (Constantinople), the capital of the Persian Empire (Mada'in), the Sasanian capital known to the West by the Greek name of Ctesiphon, (about thirty miles south of modem Baghdad), Syria, Abyssinia, and Egypt. All these (except Persia) were Christian countries. In the same connection, an embassy was also sent to Yamamah in Arabia itself (east of the Hijaz) where the Banu Hanifah tribe was Christian, like the Harith tribe of Najran who voluntarily sent an embassy to Madman. All these countries except Abyssinia eventually became Muslim, and Abyssinia itself has a considerable Muslim population now and sent some Muslim converts to Madinah in the time of the Prophet himself. As a generalisation, it is true that the Jewish and the Christian peoples as they existed in the seventh century of the Christian era have been mainly absorbed by Islam, as well as the lands in which they predominated. Remnants of them built up new nuclei. The Roman Catholic Church conquered new lands among the northern (Germanic) Pagans and the Byzantine Church among the eastern (Slavonic) Pagans, and the Protestantism of the 16th century gave a fresh stimulus to the main ideas for which Islam stands, *viz.,* the abolition of priestcraft, the right of private judgement, the simplification of ritual, and the insistence upon the simple, practical, everyday duties of life.

3477 The Pagan Arabs also gradually came in until they were all absorbed in Islam.

48. And thou wast not (able) to recite a Book before this (Book came), nor art thou (able) to transcribe it with thy right hand:(3478) In that case, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted.

3478 The Holy Prophet was not a learned man. Before the Qur'an was revealed to him, he never claimed to proclaim a Message from Allah. He was not in the habit of preaching eloquent truths as from a Book, before he received his Revelations, nor was he able to write or transcribe with his own hand. If he had had these worldly gifts, there would have been some plausibility in the charge of the talkers of vanities that he spoke not from inspiration but from other people's books, or that he composed the beautiful verses of the Qur'an himself and committed them to memory in order to recite them to people. The circumstance in which the Qur'an came bear their own testimony to its truth as from Allah.

49. Nay, here are Signs self-evident in the hearts of those endowed with knowledge:(3479) and none but the unjust reject Our Signs.(3480)

3479 "Knowledge" *('ilm)* means both power of judgement in discerning the value of truth and acquaintance with previous revelations. It implies both literary and spiritual insight. To men so endowed, Allah's revelations and Signs are self-evident. They commend themselves to their hearts, minds, and understandings, which are typified in Arabic by the word *sadr,* "breast".

3480 *Cf.* the last clause of verse 47 above. There the argument was that the rejection of the Qur'an was a mark of Unbelief. Now the argument is carried a stage farther. Such rejection is also a mark of injustice, a deliberate perversity in going against obvious Signs, which should convince all honest men.

50. Ye they say: "Why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "The signs are indeed with Allah. and I am indeed a clear Warner."(3481)

3481 See last note. In the Qur'an, as said in verse 49, are Signs which should carry conviction to all honest hearts. And yet the Unbelievers ask for Signs! They mean some special kinds of Signs or Miracles, such as their own foolish minds dictate. Everything is possible for Allah, but Allah is not going to humour the follies of men or listen to their disingenuous demands. He has sent a Messenger to explain His Signs clearly, and to warn them of the consequences of rejection. Is it not enough?

51. And is it not enough for them that we have sent down to thee the Book which is rehearsed to them? Verily, in it is Mercy and a Reminder to those who believe.(3482)

3482 The perspicuous Qur'an, as explained in detail by Allah's Messenger, in conjunction with Allah's Signs in nature and in the hearts of men, should be enough for all. It is mere fractious opposition to demand vaguely something more. *(Cf.* also 6:124, and n. 946).

52. Say: "Enough is Allah for a witness between me and you: He knows what is in the heavens(3483) and on earth. And it is those who believe in vanities and reject Allah, that will perish (in the end).(3484)

3483 The test of a Revelation is whether it comes from Allah or not. This is made clear by the life and teachings of the Messenger who brings it. No fraud or falsehood can for a moment stand before Allah. All the most hidden things in heaven and earth are open before Him.

3484 If Truth is rejected, Truth does not suffer. It is the rejecters who suffer and perish in the end.

53. They ask thee to hasten on the Punishment(3485) (for them): had it not been for a term (of respite) appointed, the Punishment would certainly have come to them: and it will certainly reach them,- of a sudden, while they perceive not!

3485 *Cf.* 22:47 and n. 2826. The rejecters of Faith throw out a challenge out of bravado: "Let us see if you can hasten the punishment on us!" This is a vain taunt. Allah's Plan will take its course, and it can neither be delayed nor hastened. It is out of His Mercy that He gives respite to sinners— in order that they may have a chance of repentance. If they do not repent, the Punishment must certainly come to them—and on a sudden, before they perceive that it is coming! And then it will be too late for repentance.

54. They ask thee to hasten on the Punishment:(3486) but, of a surety, Hell will encompass the Rejecters of Faith!-

3486 The challenge of the wicked for Punishment was answered in the last verse by reference to Allah's merciful Respite, to give chances of repentance. It is answered in this verse by an assurance that if no repentance is forthcoming, the Punishment will be certain and of an all-pervasive kind. Hell will surround them on all sides, and above them and below them.

55. On the Day that the Punishment shall cover them from above them and from below them,(3487) and (a Voice) shall say: "Taste ye (the fruits) of your deeds!"(3488)

3487 *Cf.* a similar phrase in 6:65.

3488 This is not merely a reproach, but a justification of the Punishment. "It is you who brought it on yourselves by your evil deeds: blame none but yourselves. Allah's Mercy gave you many chances: His Justice has now overtaken you."

56. O My servants who believe! truly, spacious is My Earth:(3489) therefore serve ye Me - (and Me alone)!

3489 There is no excuse for any one to plead that he could not do good or was forced to evil by his circumstances and surroundings, or by the fact that he lived in evil times. We must shun evil and seek good, and Allah's Creation is wide enough to enable us to do that, provided we have the will, the patience, and the constancy to do it. It may be that we have to change our village or city or country; or that we have to change our neighbours or associates; or to change our habits or our hours, our position in life or our human relationships, or our callings. Our integrity before Allah is more important than any of these things, and we must be prepared for exile for *Hijrah)* in all these senses. For the means with which Allah provides us for His service are ample, and it is our fault if we fail *(Cf.* 39:10).

57. Every soul shall have a taste of death:(3490) In the end to Us shall ye be brought back.

3490 *Cf.* 3:185. n. 491, and 21:35 and n. 2697. Death is the separation of the soul from the body when the latter perishes. We should not be afraid of death, for it only brings us back to Allah. The various kinds of *hijrah* or exile, physical and spiritual, mentioned in the last note, are also modes of death in a sense: what is there to fear in them?

58. But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness - to them shall We give a Home in Heaven,-(3491) lofty mansions beneath which flow rivers,- to dwell therein for aye;- an excellent reward for those who do (good)!-

3491 The goodly homes mentioned in 16:41 referred to this life, but it was stated there that the reward of the Hereafter would be greater. Here the simile of the Home is referred to Heaven: it will be beautiful: it will be picturesque, with the sight and sound of softly murmuring streams: it will be lofty or sublime: and it will be eternal.

59. Those who persevere in patience, and put their trust, in their Lord and Cherisher.

60. How many are the creatures that carry not their own(3492) sustenance? It is Allah who feeds (both) them and you: for He hears and knows (all things).

3492 If we look at the animal creation, we see that many creatures seem almost helpless to find their own food or sustain their full life, being surrounded by many enemies. Yet in the Plan of Allah they find full sustenance and protection. So does man. Man's needs—as well as helplessness—are by many degrees greater. Yet Allah provides for him as for all His creatures. Allah listens to the wish and cry of all His creatures and He knows their needs and how to provide for them all. Man should not therefore hesitate to suffer exile or persecution in Allah's Cause.

61. If indeed thou ask them(3493) who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected(3494) the sun and the moon (to his Law), they will certainly reply, "(Allah)". How are they then deluded away (from the truth)?

3493 *Cf.* 23:84-89. "Them" in both passages refers to the sort of inconsistent men who acknowledge the power of Allah, but are deluded by false notions into disobedience of Allah's Law and disregard of Allah's Message (see also 31:25, 43:9, and 43:11).

3494 *Cf.* 13:2, and 23:85. The perfect order and law of Allah's universe should be Signs to man's intelligence to get his own will into tune with Allah's Will; for only so can he hope to attain his full development.

62. Allah enlarges the sustenance (which He gives) to whichever of His servants He pleases;(3495) and He (similarly) grants by (strict) measure, (as He pleases): for Allah has full knowledge of all things.

3495 *Cf.* 13:26 . Unequal gifts are not a sign of chaos in Allah's universe. Allah provides for all according to their real needs and their most suitable requirement, according to His perfect knowledge and understanding of His creatures.

63. And if indeed thou ask them(3496) who it is that sends down rain from the sky, and gives life therewith to the earth after its death, they will certainly reply, "(Allah)!" Say, "Praise be to Allah." But most of them understand not.

3496 In 29:61 above, the point was that there is a certain type of man that realises the power of Allah, but yet goes after false ideas and false worship. Here the point is that there is another type of man to whom the goodness of Allah is made clear by rain and the gifts of nature and who realises the daily, seasonal, and secular changes which evidence Allah's goodness in giving us life (physical and spiritual) and reviving us after we seem to die,-and who yet fails to draw the right conclusion from it and to make his own life true and beautiful, so that when his period of probation in this transitory life is ended, he can enter into his eternal heritage. Having come so far such men fail at the crucial stage. At that stage they ought to have praised and glorified Allah, and accepted His Grace and Light, but they show their want of true understanding by failing to profit by Allah's gifts.

64. What is the life of this world but amusement and play?(3497) but verily the Home in the Hereafter,- that is life indeed, if they but knew.

3497 *Cf.* 6:32 . Amusement and play have no lasting significance except as preparing us for the serious work of life. So this life is but an interlude, a preparation for the real Life, which is in the Hereafter. This world's vanities are therefore to be taken for what they are worth; but they are not to be allowed to deflect our minds from the requirements of the inner life that really matters.

65. Now, if they embark on a boat, they call on Allah, making their devotion sincerely (and exclusively) to Him;(3498) but when He has delivered them safely to (dry) land, behold, they give a share (of their worship to others)!-

3498 *Cf.* 7:29 , where I have slightly varied the English phrase according to the context.

It was shown in the last verse that the life of this world is fleeting, and that the true life—that which matters—is the Life in the Hereafter. In contrast with this inner reality is now shown the shortsighted folly of man. When he faces the

physical dangers of the sea, which are but an incident in the phenomenal world, he actually and sincerely seeks the help of Allah; but when he is safely back on land, he forgets the Realities. plunges into the pleasures and vanities of fleeting phenomena, and his devotion, which should be given exclusively to Allah, is shared by idols and vanities of his own imagination. (R).

66. Disdaining ungratefully Our gifts, and giving themselves up(3499) to (worldly) enjoyment! But soon will they know.

3499 Such folly results in the virtual rejection (even though it may not be express) of Allah and His Grace. It plunges man into the pleasures and vanities that merely delude and are bound to pass away. This delusion, however, will come to an end when the true Reality of the Hereafter will shine forth in all its splendour.

67. Do they not then see that We have made a sanctuary secure, and that men are being snatched away from all around them?(3500) Then, do they believe in that which is vain, and reject the Grace of Allah.

3500 If they want evidences of their folly in the phenomenal world itself, they will see sacred Sanctuaries where Allah's Truth abides safely in the midst of the Deluge of broken hopes, disappointed ambitions and unfulfilled plans in the world around. The immediate reference was to the Sanctuary of Makkah and the gradual progress of Islam in the districts surrounding the Quraysh in the midst of the trying Makkan period. But the general application holds good for all times and places.

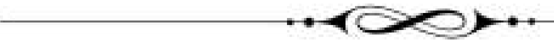
68. And who does more wrong(3501) than he who invents a lie against Allah or rejects the Truth when it reaches him? Is there not a home in Hell for those who reject Faith?

3501 *Cf.* 6:21 . Even from a worldly point of view those who reject Allah's Truth are at a disadvantage. But those who deliberately invent lies and set up false gods for worship-what punishment can we imagine for them except a permanent deprivation of Allah's grace, and a home in Hell? (R).

69. And those who strive(3502) in Our (cause),- We will certainly guide them to Our Paths:(3503) For verily Allah is with those who do right.

3502 *Strive in Our Cause.* All that man can do is to strive in Allah's Cause. As soon as he strives with might and main, with constancy and determination, the Light and Mercy of Allah come to meet him. They cure his defects and shortcomings. They provide him with the means by which he can raise himself above himself. They point out the Way, and all the Paths leading up to it. See next note.

3503 The Way of Allah *(al Sirat al Mustaqim)* is a Straight Way . But men have strayed from it in all directions. And there are numerous Paths by which they can get back to the Right Way , the way in which the purity of their own nature, and the Will and Mercy of Allah, require them to walk. All these numerous Paths become open to them once they give their hearts in keeping to Allah and work in right Endeavour *(Jihad)* with all their mind and soul and resources. Thus will they get out of the Spider's web of this frail world and attain to eternal Bliss in the fulfilment of their true Destiny.



30. Al Rum (The Romans)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A. L. M.(3504)

3504 See n. 25 to *2:* 1 and Introduction to this Surah.

2. The Roman Empire(3505) has been defeated-

3505 The remarkable defeats of the Roman Empire under Heraclius and the straits to which it was reduced are reviewed in Appendix VIII (to follow this Surah). It was not merely isolated defeats; the Roman Empire lost most of its Asiatic territory and was hemmed in on all sides at its capital, Constantinople . The defeat, "in a land close by" must refer to Syria and Palestine . Jerusalem was lost in 614-15 A.C., shortly before this Surah was revealed.

3. In a land close by; but they, (even) after (this) defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious-(3506)

3506 The Pagan Quraysh of Makkah rejoiced at the overthrow of Rome by Persia . They were pro-Persian. and in their heart of hearts they hoped that the nascent movement of Islam, which at that time was, from a worldly point of view, *very* weak and helpless, would also collapse under their persecution. But they misread the true Signs of the times. They are told here that they would soon be disillusioned in both their calculations, and it actually so happened at the battle of Issus in 622 A.C. (the year of Hijrah) and in 624 A.C., when Heraclius carried his campaign into the heart of Persia (see Appendix VIII) and the Makkan Quraysh were beaten off at Badr.

4. Within a few years.(3507) With Allah is the Decision, in the past and in the Future: on that Day shall the Believers rejoice-(3508)

3507 *Bid'* in the text means a short period-a period of from three to nine years. The period between the loss of Jerusalem (614-15 A.C.) by the Romans and their victory at Issus (622 A.C.) was seven years, and that to the penetration of Persia by Heraclius was nine years. See last note.

3508 See n. 3506 and Appendix VIII. The battle of Badr (2 A.H. = 624 A.C.) was a real time of rejoicing for the Believers and a time of disillusionment for the arrogant Quraysh , who thought that they could crush the whole movement of Islam in Madinah as they had tried to do in Makkah, but they were signally repulsed. Seen. 352 to 3:13.

5. With the help of Allah. He helps whom He will,(3509) and He is exalted in might, most merciful.

3509 *Whom He will* As explained elsewhere, Allah's Will or Plan is not arbitrary: it is full of the highest wisdom. His Plan is formed in mercy, so as to safeguard the interests of *all* his creatures, against the selfish aggrandizement of any section against them. And He is able to carry out His Plan in full, and there is no power that can stop or delay His Plan.

6. (It is) the promise of Allah.(3510) Never does Allah depart from His promise: but most men understand not.

3510 The promise refers to the Decision of all things by the Command of Allah, Who will remove all troubles and difficulties from the path of His righteous Believers, and help them to rejoice over the success of their righteous Cause. This refers to all times and all situations. The righteous should not despair in their darkest moments, for Allah's help will come. Ordinarily men are puffed up if they score a seeming temporary success against the righteous, and do not realise that Allah's Will can never be thwarted.

7. They know but the outer(3511) (things) in the life of this world: but of the End of things(3512) they are heedless.

3511 Men are misled by the outward show of things, though the inner reality may be quite different. Many seeming disasters are really godsends if we only understood.

3512 *Akhirah:* I have usually translated "Hereafter". Here the context is perfectly general, and refers to the End of things or enterprises in history as well as the Hereafter in the technical theological sense.

8. Do they not reflect in their own minds? Not but for just ends(3513) and for a term appointed, did Allah create the heavens and the earth, and all between them: yet are there truly many among men who deny the meeting(3514) with their Lord (at the Resurrection)!

3513 *Cf.* 15:85. Here the argument is about the ebb and flow of worldly power, and the next clause is appropriately added, "and for a term appointed". Let not any one who is granted worldly power or advantage run away with the notion that it is permanent. It is definitely limited in the high Purpose of Allah, which is just and true. And an account will have to be given of it afterwards on the basis of strict personal responsibility.

3514 It is therefore all the more strange that there should be men who not only forget themselves but even deny that there is a return to Allah or an End or Hereafter, when a full reckoning will be due for this period of probation. They are asked to study past history, as in the next verse.

9. Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them? They were superior to them in strength: they tilled the soil and populated it in greater numbers than these have done: there came to them their messengers with Clear (Signs).(3515) (Which they rejected, to their own destruction): It was not Allah Who wronged them, but they wronged their own souls.

3515 Let not any generation think that it is superior to all the went before it. We may be "heirs to all the ages, in the foremost files of times." That is no reason for arrogance, but on the contrary adds to our responsibility. When we realise what flourishing cities and kingdoms existed before, how they flourished in numbers and prosperity, what chances they were given, and how they perished when they disobeyed the law of Allah, we shall feel a sense of humility, and see that it was rebellion and self-will that brought them down. Allah was more than just. He was also merciful. But they brought about their own ruin *(Cf.* 35:44).

10. In the long run evil in the extreme(3516) will be the End of those who do evil; for that they rejected the Signs of Allah, and held them up to ridicule.

3516 The Arabic superlative feminine, referring to the feminine noun *'Aqibah,* I have translated by "Evil in the extreme". In this life good and evil may seem to be mixed up, and it may be that some things or persons that are evil get what seem to be good rewards or blessings, while the opposite happens to the good. But this is only a temporary appearance. In the long run Evil will have its own evil consequences, multiplied cumulatively. And this, because Evil not only rejected Allah's Message of Good but laughed at Good and misled others.

11. It is Allah Who begins (the process of) creation;(3517) then repeats it; then shall ye be brought back to Him.

3517 Nothing exists of its own accord or fortuitously. It is Allah Who originates all creation. What appears to be death may be only transformation; for Allah can and does recreate. And His creative activity is continuous. Our death is but a phenomenal event. What we become after death is the result of a process of recreation by Allah, Who is both the source and the goal of all things. When we are brought back to him, it will be as conscious and responsible beings, to receive the consequences of our brief life on this earth *(Cf.* 30:27).

12. On the Day that the Hour will be established,(3518) the guilty will be struck dumb with despair.

3518 *The Hour will be established:* in due time the Hour will come when Judgement will be established, and the seeming disturbance of balance in this world will be redressed. Then the Good will rejoice, and the Guilty, faced with the Realities, will lose all their illusions and be struck dumb with despair.

13. No intercessor will they have among their "Partners",(3519) and they will (themselves) reject their "Partners".

3519 False worship will then appear in its true colours. Anything to which we offered the worship due to Allah alone, will vanish instead of being of any help. Indeed the deluded false worshippers, whose eyes will now be opened, will themselves reject their falsehoods, as the Truth will now shine with unquestioned splendour.

14. On the Day that the Hour will be established,- that Day shall (all men)(3520) be sorted out.

3520 In the fullness of time good and evil will all be sorted out and separated. The good will reach their destination of felicity in rich and luscious, well-watered meadows, which stand as the type of all that is fair to see and pleasant to feel. The evil will no longer imagine that they are enjoying good fortune, for the testing time will be over, and the grim reality will stare them in the face. They will receive their just Punishment. (R).

15. Then those who have believed and worked righteous deeds, shall be made happy in a Mead of Delight.

16. And those who have rejected Faith and falsely denied our Signs and the meeting of the Hereafter,- such shall be brought forth to Punishment.

17. So (give) glory to Allah, when ye reach eventide(3521) and when ye rise in the morning;

3521 - The special times for Allah's remembrance are so described as to include all our activites in life-when we rise early in the morning, and when we go to rest in the evening; when we are in the midst of our work, at the decline of the sun, and in the late afternoon. It may be noted that these are all striking stages in the passage of the sun through our terrestrial day, as well as stages in our daily working lives. On this are based the hours of the five canonical prayers afterwards prescibed in Madinah; *viz.,* (1) early morning before sunrise (Fajr); (2) when the day begins to decline, just after noon (Zuhr); (3) in the late afternoon, say midway between noon and sunset ('Asr); and (4) and (5) the two evening prayers, one just after sunset (Maghrib), and the other after the evening twilight has all faded from the horizon, the hour indicated for rest and sleep (Isha'). *Cf.* 11:114, nn. 1616-17; 17:78-79, n. 2275; 20:130, n. 2655.

18. Yea, to Him be praise, in the heavens and on earth; and in the late afternoon and when the day begins to decline.

19. It is He Who brings out the living from the dead, and brings out the dead(3522) from the living, and Who gives life to the earth(3523) after it is dead: and thus shall ye be brought out (from the dead).

3522 *Cf.* 10:31 . From dead matter Allah's creative act produces life and living matter, and even science has not yet been able to explain the mystery of life. Life and living matter again seem to reach maturity and again die, as we see every day. No material thing seems to have perpetual life. But again we see the creative process of Allah constantly at work, and the cycle of life and death seems to go on, (see also 36:12).

3523 *Cf.* 2:164. The earth itself, seemingly so inert, produces vegetable life at once from a single shower of rain, and in various ways sustains animal life. Normally it seems to die in the winter in northern climates, and in a drought everywhere, and the spring revives it in all its glory. Metaphorically many movements, institutions, organisations, seem to die and then to live again, all under the wonderful dispensation of Allah. So will our personality be revived when we apparently die on this earth, in order to reap the fruit of this, our probationary life, (see also 36:33).

20. Among His Signs in this, that He created you(3524) from dust; and then,- behold, ye are men scattered (far and wide)!

3524 *Cf.* 18:37 and n. 2379. In spite of the lowly origin of man's body, Allah has given him a mind and soul by which he can almost compass the farthest reaches of Time and Space. Is this not enough for a miracle or Sign? From a physical point of view, see how man, a creature of dust, scatters himself over the farthest corners of the earth!

21. And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among(3525) yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them,(3526) and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.

3525 This refers to the wonderful mystery of sex. Children arise out of the union of the sexes. And it is always the female sex that brings forth the offspring, whether female or male. And the father is as necessary as the mother for bringing forth daughters.

3526 *Cf.* 7:189. Unregenerate man is pugnacious in the male sex, but rest and tranquillity are found in the normal relations of a father and mother dwelling together and bringing up a family. A man's chivalry to the opposite sex is natural and God-given. The friendship of two men between each other is quite different in quality and temper from the feeling which unspoilt nature expects as between men and women. There is a special kind of love and tenderness between them. And as woman is the weaker vessel, that tenderness may from a certain aspect be likened to mercy, the protecting kindness which the strong should give to the weak, (see also 4:1).

22. And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations(3527) in your languages and your colours: verily in that are Signs for those who know.

3527 The variations in languages and colours may be viewed from the geographical aspect or from the aspect of periods of time. All mankind was created of a single pair of parents; yet they have spread to different countries and climates and developed different languages and different shades of complexions. And yet their basic unity remains unaltered. They feel in the same way, and are all equally under Allah's care. Then there are the variations in time. Old languages die out and new ones are evolved. New conditions of life and thought are constantly evolving new words and expressions, new syntactical structures, and new modes of pronunciation. Even old races die, and new races are born.

23. And among His Signs is the sleep that ye take by night and by day,(3528) and the quest that ye (make for livelihood) out of His Bounty: verily in that are signs for those who hearken.(3529)

3528 If we consider deeply, sleep and dreams, the refreshment we get from sleep to wakefulness as well as from wakefulness to sleep, as also the state of our thoughts and feelings and subconscious self in these conditions, are both wonderful and mysterious. Normally, we sleep by night and do our ordinary work "in quest of the Bounty of Allah" by day. But sleep and rest may come and be necessary by day, and we may have to work by night. And our work for our livelihood may pass by insensible transitions to our work or thought or service of a higher and spiritual kind. These processes suggest a background of things which we know but vaguely, but which are as much miracles as other Signs of Allah.

3529 From verse 20 to verse 25 are mentioned a series of Signs or Miracles, which should awaken our souls and lead us to true Reality if we try to understand Allah. (1) There is our own origin and destiny, which must necessarily be our subjective starting-point: "I think; therefore I am": no particular exertion of our being is here necessary (30:20). (2) The first beginnings of social life arise through sex and love: see 4:1, and n. 506; to understand this in all its bearing, we must "reflect" (30:21). (3) The next point is to understand our diversities in speech, colour, etc., arising from differences of climate and external conditions; yet there is unity beneath that diversity, which we shall realise by extended knowledge (30:22). (4) Next we turn to our psychological conditions, sleep, rest, visions, insight, etc.; here we want teaching and guidance, to which we must hearken (30:23). (5) Next, we must approach the higher reaches of spiritual hopes and fears, as symbolised by such subtle forces of nature as lightning and electricity, which may kill the foolish or bring prosperity in its train by rain and abundant harvests; to understand the highest spiritual hopes and fears so symbolised, we want the highest wisdom (30:24). (6) And lastly, we may become so transformed that we rise above all petty, worldly, ephemeral things: Allah calls to us and we rise, as from our dead selves to a Height which we can only describe as the Heaven of stability: here no human processes serve, for the Call of Allah Himself has come (30:25-27).

24. And among His Signs, He shows you the lightning, by way both of fear(3530) and of hope, and He sends down rain from the sky and with it gives life to the earth after it is dead: verily in that are Signs for those who are wise.

3530 See last note, item (5). *Cf.* 13:12 . To cowards lightning and thunder appear as terrible forces of nature: lightning seems to kill and destroy where its irresistible progress is not assisted by proper lightning-conductors. But lightning is also a herald of rain-bearing clouds and showers that bring fertility and prosperity in their train. This double aspect is also symbolical of spiritual fears and hopes-fears lest we may not be found receptive or worthy of the irresistible perspicuous Message of Allah, and hopes that we may receive in the right spirit and be blessed by its mighty power of transformation to achieve spiritual well-being. Note that the repetition of the phrase "gives life to the earth after it is dead" connects this verse with verse 19 above: in other words, the Revelation, which we must receive with wisdom and understanding, is a Sign of Allah's own power and mercy, and is vouchsafed in order to safeguard our own final Future.

25. And among His Signs is this, that heaven and earth stand by His Command:(3531) then when He calls you, by a single call, from the earth, behold, ye (straightway) come forth.

3531 In the physical world, the sky and the earth, as we see them, stand unsupported, by the artistry of Allah. They bear witness to Allah, and in-that our physical life depends on them-the earth for its produce and the sky for rain, the heat of the sun, and other phenomena of nature-they call to our mind our relation to Allah Who made them and us. How can we then be so dense as not to realise that our higher Future-our *Ma'ad-is,* bound up with the call and the mercy of Allah!

26. To Him belongs every being that is in the heavens and on earth: all are(3532) devoutly obedient to Him.

3532 All nature in Creation not only obeys Allah, but devoutly obeys Him, *i.e.,* glories in its privilege of service and obedience. Why should we not do likewise? It is part of our original unspoilt nature, and we must respond to it, as all beings do, by their very nature.

27. It is He Who begins (the process of) creation;(3533) then repeats it; and for Him it is most easy. To Him belongs the loftiest(3534) similitude (we can think of) in the heavens and the earth: for He is Exalted in Might, full of wisdom.

3533 *Cf.* 30:11 above, where the same phrase began the argument about the beginning and end of all things being with Allah. This has been illustrated by reference to various Signs in Creation, and now the argument is rounded off with the same phrase.

3534 Allah's glory and Allah's attributes are above any names we can give them. Human language is not adequate to express them. We can only form some idea of them at our present stage by means of Similitudes and Parables. But even so, the highest we can think of falls short of the true Reality. For Allah is higher and wiser than the highest and wisest we can think of *(Cf.* 16:60).

28. He does propound to you a similitude from your own (experience):(3535) do ye have partners among those whom your right hands possess, to share as equals in the wealth We have(3536) bestowed on you? Do ye fear(3537) them as ye fear each other? Thus do we explain the Signs in detail to a people that understand.(3538)

3535 One way in which we can get some idea of the things higher than our own plane is to think of Parables and Similitudes drawn from our own lives and experience. And such a Similitude or Parable is offered to us now about false worship. See next note.

3536 Allah is far higher above His Creation than any, the highest, of His creatures can be above any, the lowest, of His creatures. And yet would a man share his wealth on equal terms with his dependents? Even what he calls his wealth is not really his own, but given by Allah. It is "his" in common speech by reason merely of certain accidental circumstances. How then can men raise Allah's creatures to equality with Allah in worship?

3537 Men fear each other as equals in a state of society at perpetual warfare. To remove this fear they appoint an authority among themselves-a King or sovereign authority whom they consider just-to preserve them from this fear and give them an established order. But they must obey and revere this authority and depend upon this authority for their own tranquillity and security. Even with their equals there is always the fear of public opinion. But men do not fear, or obey, or revere those who are their slaves or dependents. Man is dependent on Allah. And Allah is the Sovereign authority in an infinitely higher sense. He is in no sense dependent on us, but we must honour and revere Him and fear to disobey His Will or His Law. "The fear of Allah is the beginning of wisdom."

3538 *Cf.* 6:55 , and 7:32 , 174, etc.

29. Nay, the wrong-doers (merely) follow their own lusts, being devoid of knowledge. But who will guide those whom Allah leaves astray?(3539) To them there will be no helpers.

3539 The wrongdoers—those who deliberately reject Allah's guidance and break Allah's Law-have put themselves out of the region of Allah's mercy. In this they have put themselves outside the pale of the knowledge of what is for their own good. In such a case they must suffer the consequences of the personal responsibility which flows from the grant of a limited free will. Who can then guide them or help them?

30. So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith:(3540) (establish) Allah.s handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought)(3541) by Allah. that is the standard Religion:(3542) but most among mankind understand not.

3540 For *Hanif see* n. 134 to 2:135. Here "true" is used in the sense in which we say, "the magnetic needle is true to the north." Those who have been privileged to receive the Truth should never hesitate or swerve, but remain constant, as men who know.

3541 As turned out from the creative hand of Allah, man is innocent, pure, true, free, inclined to right and virtue, and endued with true understanding about his own position in the Universe and about Allah's goodness, wisdom, and power *(Cf.* n. 682 and n. 5360). That is his true nature, just as the nature of a lamb is to be gentle and of a horse is to be swift. But man is caught in the meshes of customs, superstitions, selfish desires, and false teaching. This may make him pugnacious, unclean, false, slavish, hankering after what is wrong or forbidden, and deflected from the love of his fellow-men and the pure worship of the One True God (see also 30:41). The problem before spiritual Teachers is to cure this crookedness, and to restore human nature to what it should be under the Will of Allah.

3542 In 9:36 , I translated *al-Din al-qayyim as* "straight usage." Here the meaning is wider, as it includes the whole life, thoughts and desires of man. The "standard Religion," or the Straight Way is thus contrasted with the various human systems that conflict with each other and call themselves separate "religions" or "sects" (see verse 32 below). Allah's standard Religion is one, as God is One.

31. Turn ye back in repentance(3543) to Him, and fear Him: establish regular prayers, and be not ye among those who join gods with Allah,-

3543 "Repentance" does not mean sackcloth and ashes, or putting on a gloomy pessimism. It means giving up disease for health, crookedness (which is abnormal) for the Straight Way , the restoration of our nature as Allah created it from the falsity introduced by the enticements of Evil. To revert to the simile of the magnetic needle (n. 3540 above), if the needle is held back by obstructions, we must restore its freedom, so that it points true again to the magnetic pole.

32. Those who split up their Religion, and become (mere) Sects,- each party rejoicing in that which(3544) is with itself!

3544 A good description of self-satisfied sectarianism as against real Religion. See n. 3542 above.

33. When trouble touches men, they cry to their Lord,(3545) turning back to Him in repentance: but when He gives them a taste of Mercy as from Himself, behold, some of them pay part-worship to other god´s besides their Lord,-

3545 *Cf.* 10:12- It is trouble, distress, or adversity that makes men realise their helplessness and turns their attention back to the true Source of all goodness and happiness. But when they are shown special Mercy-often more than they deserve-they forget themselves and attribute it to their own cleverness, or to the stars, or to some false ideas to which they pay court and worship, either to the exclusion of Allah or in addition to the lip-worship which they pay to Allah. Their action in any case amounts to gross ingratitude; but in the circumstances it looks as if they had gone out of their way to show ingratitude.

34. (As if) to show their ingratitude for the (favours) We have bestowed on them! Then enjoy (your brief day); but soon will ye know (your folly).(3546)

3546 *Cf* 16:54. They are welcome to their fancies and false worship, and to the enjoyment of the pleasures of this Life, but they will soon be disillusioned. Then they will realise the true values of the things they neglected and the things they cultivated.

35. Or have We sent down authority to them, which points out to them(3547) the things to which they pay part-worship?

3547 Their behaviour is exactly as if they were satisfied within themselves that they were entitled or given a licence to worship God and Mammon. In fact the whole thing is their own invention or delusion.

36. When We give men a taste of Mercy,(3548) they exult thereat: and when some evil afflicts them because of what their (own) hands have sent forth, behold, they are in despair!

3548 *Cf.* 30:33. In that passage the unreasonable behaviour of men in sorrow and in affluence is considered with reference to their attitude to Allah: in distress they turn to Him, but in prosperity they turn to other things. Here the contrast in the two situations is considered with reference to men's inner psychology: in affluence they are puffed up and unduly elated, and in adversity they lose all heart. Both attitudes are wrong. In prosperity men should realise that it is not their merits that deserve all the Bounty of Allah, but that it is given out of Allah's abundant generosity; in adversity they should remember that their suffering is brought on by their own folly and sin, and humbly pray for Allah's grace and mercy, in order that they may be set on their feet again. For, as the next verse points out, Allah gives opportunities, gifts, and the good things of life to every one, but in greater or lesser measure, and at some time or other, according to His All-Wise Plan, which is the expression of His Holy and benevolent Will (see also 42:48).

37. See they not that Allah enlarges the provision and restricts it, to whomsoever(3549) He pleases? Verily in that are Signs for those who believe.

3549 *Cf.* 28:82 and n. 3412. Also see last note. Allah's grant of certain gifts to some, as well as His withholding of certain gifts from others, are themselves Signs (trial or warnings) to men of faith and understanding.

38. So give what is due to kindred, the needy, and the wayfarer. That is best for those who seek the Countenance,(3550) of Allah, and it is they who will prosper.(3551)

3550 For *Wajh* (Face, Countenance), see n. 114 to 2:112. Also see 6:52 .

3551 In both this life and the next. See n. 29 to 2:5.

39. That which ye lay out for increase through the property of (other) people, will have(3552) no increase with Allah. but that which ye lay out for charity, seeking the Countenance of Allah,(3553) (will increase): it is these who will get a recompense multiplied.

3552 *Riba* (literally 'usury' or 'interest') is prohibited, for the principle is that any profit which we should seek should be through our own exertions and at our own expense, not through exploiting other people or at their expense, however we may wrap up the process in the spacious phraseology of high finance or City jargon. But we are asked to go beyond this negative precept of avoiding what is wrong. We should show our active love for our neighbourhood by spending our own substance or resources or the utilisation of our own talents and opportunities in the service of those who need them. Then our reward or recompense will not be merely what we deserve. It will be multiplied to many times more than our strict account. According to Commentators this verse specially applies to those who give to others, whether gifts or services, in order to receive from them greater benefits in return. Such seemingly good acts are void of any merit and deserve no reward from Allah since He knows the real intention behind such ostensibly good deeds. (R).

3553 Seeking the "Face" or "Countenance" of Allah, *i.e., out* of our pure love for the true vision of Allah's own Self. See also n. 3550 above.

40. It is Allah Who has created you: further, He has provided for your sustenance; then He will cause you to die; and again He will give you life. Are there any of your (false) "Partners"(3554) who can do any single

one of these things? Glory to Him! and high is He above the partners(3555) they attribute (to him)!

3554 The person or thing or ideas to which we give part-worship, while our whole and exclusive worship is due to Allah, are the "Partners" we set up. Do we owe our existence to them? Do they sustain our being? Can they take or give back to us? Certainly not. Then how foolish of us to give them part-worship!

3555 *Cf.* 10:18 and similar passages.

41. Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned(3556) that (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they(3557) may turn back (from Evil).

3556 Allah's Creation was pure and good in itself. All the mischief or corruption was introduced by Evil, viz., arrogance, selfishness, etc. See n. 3541 to 30:30 above. As soon as the mischief has come in, Allah's mercy and goodness step in to stop it. The consequences of Evil must be evil, and this should be shown in such partial punishment as "the hands of men have earned," so that it may be a warning for the future and an invitation to enter the door of repentance (see also n. 5360).

3557 The ultimate object of Allah's justice and punishment is to reclaim man from Evil, and to restore him to the pristine purity and innocence in which he was created. The Evil introduced by his possession of a limited free will should be eliminated by the education and purification of man's own will. For, with his will and motives purified, he is capable of much greater heights than a creature not endowed with any free will *(Cf.* 2:6 and 32:13).

42. Say: "Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those before (you): Most of them worshipped(3558) others besides Allah."

3558 If you contemplate history and past experience (including spiritual experience), you will find that evil and corruption tended to destroy themselves, because they had false idols for worship, false standards of conduct, and false goals of desire.

43. But set thou thy face to the right Religion before there come from Allah the Day which there is(3559) no chance of averting: on that Day shall men be divided (in two).(3560)

3559 We should recover the balance of what has been upset by Evil and Falsehood before it is too late. For a Day will surely come when true values will be restored and all falsehood and evil will be destroyed. Nothing but repentance and amendment can avert the consequences of Evil. When the Day actually comes, repentance will be too late: for the impassable barrier between Evil and Good will have been fixed, and the chance of return to Allah's pattern will have been lost.

3560 The sharp division will then have been accomplished between the unfortunate ones who rejected Truth and Faith and will suffer for their rejection, and the righteous ones who will attain Peace and Salvation: see next verse. Note that the state of the Blessed will not merely be a passive state. They will actively earn and contribute to their own happiness: "they will spread their couch of repose for themselves."

44. Those who reject Faith will suffer from that rejection: and those who work righteousness will spread their couch (of repose) for themselves (in heaven):

45. That He may reward those who believe and work righteous deeds, out of his Bounty.(3561) For He loves not those who reject Faith.(3562)

3561 Though the repose and bliss will have been won by the righteous by their own efforts, it must not be supposed that their own merits were equal to the reward they will earn. What they will get will be due to the infinite Grace and Bounty of Allah.

3562 In form this clause is (there as elsewhere) negative, but it has a positive meaning: Allah loves those who have faith and trust in Him, and will, out of His Grace and Bounty, reward them in abundant measure.

46. Among His Signs is this,(3563) that He sends the Winds, as heralds of Glad Tidings, giving you a taste of His (Grace and) Mercy,-(3564) that the ships may sail (majestically) by His Command and that ye may seek(3565) of His Bounty: in order that ye may be grateful.

3563 The theme of Allah's artistry in the physical and the spiritual world was placed before us above in 30:20-27. Then, in verses 28-40, we were shown how man and nature were pure as they came out of the hand of Allah, and how we must restore this purity in order to fulfil the Will and Plan of Allah. Now we are told how the restorative and purifying agencies were sent by Allah Himself-in both the physical and the spiritual world.

3564 *Cf.* 7:57 and n. 1036 and 25:48 and n. 3104.

3565 In the physical world, the winds not only cool and purify the air, and bring the blessings of rain, which fertilises the soil, but they help internationonal commerce and intercourse among men through seaways and now by airways. Those who know how to take advantage of these blessings of Allah prosper and rejoice, while those who ignore or fail to understand these Signs perish in storms. So in the spiritual world: heralds of glad tidings were sent by Allah in the shape of Messengers: those who profited by their Message prospered in spiritual gain, and those who ignored or opposed the Clear Sign perished spiritually: see next verse.

47. We did indeed send, before thee, messengers to their (respective) peoples, and they came to them with Clear Signs: then, to those who transgressed, We meted out Retribution: and it was due from Us to aid those who believed.

48. It is Allah Who sends the Winds, and they raise(3566) the Clouds: then does He spread them in the sky as He wills, and break them into fragments, until thou seest rain-drops issue from the midst thereof: then when He has made them reach such(3567) of his servants as He wills behold, they do rejoice!-

3566 Again the Parable of the Winds is presented from another aspect, both physical and spiritual. In the physical world, see their play with the Clouds; how they suck up the moisture from terrestrial water, carry it about in dark clouds as needed, and break it up with rain as needed. So Allah's wonderful Grace draws up men's spiritual aspirations from the most unlikely places and suspends them as dark mysteries according to His Holy Will and Plan; and when His Message reaches the hearts of men even in the smallest fragments, how its recipients rejoice, even though before it, they were in utter despair!

3567 See last note.

49. Even though, before they received (the rain) - just before this - they were dumb with despair!

50. Then contemplate (O man!) the memorials of Allah.s Mercy!- how He gives life(3568) to the earth after its death: verily the same will give life to the men who are dead: for He has power over all things.

3568 After the two Parables about the purifying action of the Winds and their fertilising action, we now have the Parable of the earth that dies in winter or drought and lives again in spring or rain, by Allah's Grace: so in the spiritual sphere, man may be dead and may live again by the Breath of Allah and His Mercy if he will only place himself in Allah's hands.

51. And if We (but) send a Wind from which(3569) they see (their tilth) turn yellow,- behold, they become, thereafter, Ungrateful (Unbelievers)!

3569 Another Parable from the forces of nature. We saw how the Winds gladdened, vivified, and enriched those who utilised them in the right spirit. But a wind might be destructive to tilth in certain circumstances: so the blessings of Allah may—by the wrongdoers resisting and blaspheming—bring punishment to the wrongdoers. Instead of taking the punishment in the right spirit—in the spirit in which Believers of Allah take their misfortunes—the Unbelievers curse and deepen their sin!

52. So verily thou canst not make the dead to hear,(3570) nor canst thou make the deaf to hear the call, when they show their backs and turn away.

3570 The marvels of Allah's creation can be realised in a general way by every one who has a disposition to allow such knowledge to penetrate his mind. But if men,

out of perversity, kill the very faculties which Allah has given them, how can they then understand? Besides the men who deaden their spiritual sense, there are men who may be likened to the deaf, who lack one faculty but to whom an appeal can be made through other faculties, such as the sense of sight: but if they turn their backs and refuse to be instructed at all, how can the Truth reach them?

53. Nor canst thou lead back the blind from their straying:(3571) only those wilt thou make to hear, who believe in Our signs and submit (their wills in Islam).

3571 See last note. Then there is the case of men about whom the saying holds true, that none are so blind as those who *will* not see. They *prefer* to stray in the paths of wrong and of sensoiy pleasures. How can they be guided in any way? The only persons who gain by spiritual teaching are those who bring a mind to it—who believe and submit their wills to Allah's Will. This is the central doctrine of Islam *(Cf.* 43:40).

54. It is Allah Who created you in a state of (helpless) weakness, then gave (you) strength after weakness, then, after strength, gave (you weakness and a hoary head:(3572) He creates as He wills, and it is He Who has all knowledge and power.

3572 What was said before about the people who make Allah's teaching "of none effect" does not mean that Evil will defeat Allah. On the contrary, we are asked to contemplate the mysteries of Allah's wisdom with another Parable. In our physical life we see how strength is evolved out of weakness and weakness out of strength. The helpless babe becomes a lusty man in the pride of manhood, and then sinks to a feeble old age: and yet there is wisdom in all these stages in the Universal Plan. So Allah carries out His Plan in the spiritual world "as He wills", *i.e.,* according to His Will and Plan, and none can gainsay it. And His Plan is wise and can never be frustrated.

55. On the Day that the Hour (of Reckoning) will be established,(3573) the transgressors will swear that they tarried not but an hour: thus were they used to being deluded!

3573 Whatever the seeming inequalities may be now-when the good appear to be weak and the strong seem to oppress-will be removed when the balance will be finally redressed. That will happen in good time-indeed so quickly that the Transgressors will be taken by surprise. They were deluded by the fact that what they took to be their triumph or their freedom to do what they liked was only a reprieve, a "Term Appointed", in which they could repent and amend and get Allah's Mercy. Failing this, they will then be up against the Penalties which they thought they had evaded or defied.

56. But those endued with knowledge and faith will say: "Indeed ye did tarry, within Allah's Decree, to the Day of Resurrection, and this is the Day(3574) of Resurrection: but ye - ye were not aware!"

3574 The men of knowledge and faith knew all along of the true values-of the things of this ephemeral life and the things that will endure and face them at the End-unlike the wrongdoers who were content with falsehoods and were taken by surprise, like ignorant men, when they faced the Realities.

57. So on that Day no excuse of theirs will avail the Transgressors,(3575) nor will they be invited (then) to seek grace (by repentance).

3575 It will be no use for those who deliberately rejected the clearest warnings in Allah's Message to say: "Oh we did not realise this!" The excuse will be false, and it would be unreasonable to suppose that they would then be asked to seek Grace by repentance. It will then be too late *(Cf.* 16:84).

58. verily We have propounded for men, in this Qur´an every kind of Parable: But if thou bring to them any Sign, the Unbelievers(3576) are sure to say, "Ye do nothing but talk vanities."

3576 Things of the highest moment have been explained in the Qur'an from various points of view, as in this Surah itself, by means of parables and similitudes drawn from nature and from our ordinary daily life. But whatever the explanation, however convincing it may be to men who earnestly seek after Truth, those who deliberately turn their backs to Truth can find nothing convincing. In their eyes the explanations are mere "vain talk" or false arguments.

59. Thus does Allah seal up(3577) the hearts of those who understand not.

3577 When an attitude of obstinate resistance to Truth is adopted, the natural consequence (by Allah's Law) is that the heart and mind get more and more hardened with every act of deliberate rejection. It becomes more and more impervious to the reception of Truth, just as a sealed envelope is unable to receive any further letter or message after it is sealed *(Cf.* 2:7 and n. 31, 6:46 , and 16:108).

60. So patiently persevere: for verily the promise of Allah is true: nor let those(3578) shake thy firmness, who have (themselves) no certainty of faith.

3578 The Prophet of Allah does not slacken in his efforts or feel discouraged because the Unbelievers laugh at him or persecute him or even seem to succeed in blocking his Message. He has firm faith, and he knows that Allah will finally establish His Truth. He goes on in his divinely entrusted task, with patience and perseverance, which must win against the levity of his opponents, who have no faith or certainty at all to sustain them. (R).

31. Luqman

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A. L. M.(3579)

3579 See n. 25 to 2:1 and Introduction to S. 30.

2. These are Verses of the Wise Book,-(3580)

3580 This Surah relates to Wisdom and the Qur'an is appropriately called the Wise Book, or the Book of Wisdom. In verse 12 below there is a reference to Luqman the Wise. "Wise" in this sense *(Hakim)* means not only a man versed in knowledge human and divine, but one carrying out in practical conduct (*'amal)* the right course in life to the utmost of his power. His knowledge is correct and practical, but not necessarily complete: for no man is perfect. Such an ideal involves the conception of a man of heroic action as well as of deep and workman-like knowledge of nature and human nature-not merely dreams or speculation. That ideal was fulfilled in a most remarkable degree in the Prophet, and in the sacred Book which was revealed through him. "The Wise Book" *(alKitab alHalum)* is one of the title of the Qur'an.

3. A Guide and a Mercy to the Doers of Good,-(3581)

3581 A guide to all, and, to those who accept its guidance, a source of mercy leading them to Salvation.

4. Those who establish regular Prayer, and give regular Charity, and have (in their hearts) the assurance of the Hereafter.(3582)

3582 The righteous are distinguished here by three marks, which are summed up in the phrase "doers of good", *viz.:* (1) they yearn towards Allah in duty, love and prayer, (2) they love and serve their fellow-men in charity, (3) they win peace and rest for themselves in the assured hope of the Future.

5. These are on (true) guidance(3583) from their Lord: and these are the ones who will prosper.

3583 They get the blessings because they submit their will to Allah's Will and receive His guidance. They will do well in this life (from the highest standpoint) and will reach their true Goal in the Future.

6. But there are, among men, those who purchase idle tales,(3584) without knowledge (or meaning), to mislead (men) from the Path of Allah and throw ridicule (on the Path): for such there will be a Humiliating Penalty.

3584 Life is taken seriously by men who realise the issues that hang upon it. But there are men of a frivolous turn of mind who prefer idle tales to true Realities and they are justly rebuked here. In the time of the Prophet there was a pagan Nadr ibn al Harith who preferred Persian romance to the Message of Allah, and turned away ignorant men from the preaching of Allah's Word.

7. When Our Signs are rehearsed to such a one, he turns(3585) away in arrogance, as if he heard them not, as if there were deafness in both his ears: announce to him a grievous Penalty.

3585 Such men behave as if they had heard nothing of serious import, or laugh at serious teaching. The loss will be their own. They will miss the higher things of fife and be left out of Allah's blessings. Ignorance and arrogance are in most cases the causes of their fall.

8. For those who believe and work righteous deeds, there will be Gardens of Bliss,-

9. To dwell therein. The promise of Allah is true: and He is Exalted in power,(3586) Wise.

3586 He is Exalted in power, and can carry out His Will, and nothing can stop the carrying out of His promise. He is also infinitely Wise: His promise is therefore full of meaning: it is not merely without purpose; it has a place in the Universal Plan.

10. He created the heavens without any pillars that ye(3587) can see; He set on the earth mountains(3588) standing firm, lest it should shake with you; and He scattered through it beasts of all kinds.(3589) We send down rain(3590) from the sky, and produce on the earth every kind of noble creature, in pairs.(3591)

3587 *Cf.* 13:2 and n. 1800.

3588 *Cf.* 16:15 and n. 2038.

3589 *Cf.* 2:164 and n. 166.

3590 Note the change of the pronoun at this stage in the verse. Before this, Allah was spoken of in the third person. "He", and the acts of Creation referred to were acts that, in the main, were completed when the universe as we see it came into being, though its slow age-long evolution continues. After this, Allah speaks in the first person "We "-the plural of honour, as explained before (see n. 56 to 2:38); and the processes spoken of are those that go on continually before us, as in the case of rain and the growth of the vegetable kingdom. In some way the creation of the heavens and the earth and animal life on it may be considered impersonal to man, while the processes of rain and vegetation may be considered in special personal relationship to him.

3591 I think that sex life in plants is referred to, as in 13:3, where see n. 1804, though the pairs here may refer to animals also. "Noble" *(karim)* may refer to the more beneficent plants and trees (and animals), which Allah has created for man's use.

11. Such is the Creation of Allah. now show Me(3592) what is there that others besides Him have created: nay, but the Transgressors are in manifest error.

3592 The transition from "We" in the last verse to "Me" in this verse means a still more personal relation to Allah; (see n. 56 to 2:38): as we are now asked about the true worship of Allah, as against the false worship of others besides Allah.

12. We bestowed (in the past) Wisdom on Luqman:(3593) "Show (thy) gratitude to Allah." Any who is (so) grateful does so to the profit of his own soul: but if any is ungrateful, verily(3594) Allah is free of all wants, Worthy of all praise.

3593 The sage Luqman, after whom this Surah is called, belongs to Arab tradition. Very little is known of his life. He is usually associated with a long life, and his title is *Mu'ammar* (the long-lived). He is referred by some to the age of the 'Ad people, for whom see n. 1040 to 7:65. He is the type of perfect wisdom. It is said that he belonged to a humble station in life, being a slave or a carpenter, and that he refused worldly power and a kingdom. Many instructive apologues are credited to him, similar to Aesop's Fables in Greek tradition. The identification of Luqman and Aesop has no historical foundation, though it is true that the traditions about them influenced each other.

3594 *Cf.* 14:8. The basis of moral Law is man's own good, and not any benefit to Allah, for Allah is above all needs, and "worthy of all praise"; *i.e.,* even in praising Him, we do not advance His glory. When we obey His Will, we bring our position into conformity with our own nature as made by Him.

13. Behold, Luqman said(3595) to his son by way of instruction: "O my son! join not in worship (others) with Allah. for false worship is indeed the highest wrong-doing."

3595 Luqman is held up as a pattern of wisdom, because he realised the best in a wise life in this world, as based upon the highest Hope in the inner life. To him, as in Islam, true human wisdom is also divine widsom; the two cannot be separated. The beginning of all wisdom, therefore, is conformity with the Will of Allah (31:12). That means that we must understand our relations to Him and

worship Him aright (31:13). Then we must be good to mankind, beginning with our own parents (31:14). For the two duties are not diverse, but one. Where they appear to conflict, there is something wrong with the human will (see n. 3597).

14. And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain(3596) was his weaning: (hear the command), "Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal.

3596 The set of milk teeth in a human child is completed at the age of two years, which is therefore the natural extreme limit for breast-feeding. In our artificial life the duration is much less (*Cf.* 2:233).

15. "But if they strive(3597) to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to me (in love):(3598) in the end the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you the truth (and meaning)(3599) of all that ye did."

3597 Where the duty to man conflicts with the duty to Allah, it means that there is something wrong with the human will, and we should obey Allah rather than man. But even here, it does not mean that we should be arrogant or insolent. To parents and those in authority, we must be kind, considerate, and courteous, even where they command things which we should not do and therefore disobedience becomes our highest duty.

The worship of things other than Allah is the worship of false things, things which are alien to our true knowledge, things that go against our own pure nature as created by Allah.

3598 In any apparent conflict of duties our standard should be Allah's Will, as declared to us by His command. That is the way of those who love Allah and their motive in disobedience to parents or human authority where disobedience is necessary by Allah's Law, is not self-willed rebellion or defiance, but love of Allah, which means the true love of man in the highest sense of the word. And the reason we should give is, "Both you and I have to return to Allah: therefore not only must I follow Allah's Will, but you must command nothing against Allah's will."

3599 These conflicts may appear to us strange and puzzling in this life. But in Allah's Presence we shall see their real meaning and significance. It may be that that was one way in which our true mettle could be tested: for it is not easy to disobey and love man at the same time.

16. "O my son!" (said Luqman),(3600) "If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock,(3601) or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth: for Allah understands(3602) the finest mysteries, (and) is well-acquainted (with them).

3600 Verses 14-15 are not the direct speech of Luqman but flow by way of commentary on his teaching. He was speaking as a father to his son, and he could not very well urge respect for himself and draw the son's attention to the limitations of that obedience. These verses may be supposed to be general directions flowing from Luqman's teaching to men, and not directed to his son, though in either case, as Luqman received wisdom from Allah, it is divine principles that are enunciated.

3601 The mustard seed is proverbially a small, minute thing, that people may ordinarily pass by. Not so Allah. Further emphasis is laid by supposing the mustard seed to be hidden beneath a rock or in the cleft of a rock, or to be lost in the spaciousness of the earth or the heavens. To Allah everything is known, and He will bring it forth; *i.e.,* take account of it.

3602 For *Latif as* a title applied to Allah, see n. 2844 to 22:63.

17. "O my son! establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong: and bear with patient constancy whatever betide thee; for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs.

18. "And swell not thy cheek(3603) (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth; for Allah loveth not any arrogant boaster.

3603 The word "cheek" in English, too, means arrogance or effrontery, with a slightly different shade added, *viz.:* effrontery from one in an inferior position to one in a superior position. The Arabic usage is wider, and includes smug self-satisfaction and a sense of lofty superiority.

19. "And be moderate in thy pace, and lower(3604) thy voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass."

3604 The "Golden Mean" is the pivot of the philosophy of Luqman as it is the philosophy of Aristotle and indeed of Islam. And it flows naturally from a true understanding of our relation to Allah and His universe and to our fellow-creatures, especially man. In all things be moderate. Do not go the pace, and, do not stand stationary or slow. Do not be talkative and do not be silent. Do not be loud and do not be timid or half-hearted. Do not be too confident, and do not be cowed down. If you have patience, it is to give you constancy and determination, that you may bravely carry on the struggle of life. If you have humility, it is to save you from unseemly swagger, not to curb your right spirit and your reasoned determination.

20. Do ye not see that Allah has subjected(3605) to your (use) all things in the heavens and on earth, and has made his bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen?(3606) Yet there are among men those who dispute about Allah, without knowledge and without guidance, and without a Book(3607) to enlighten them!

3605 Allah's Creation is independent of man. But Allah, in His infinite mercy, has given man the faculty to subdue the forces of nature and to penetrate through high mysteries with his powers of reason and insight. But this is not merely a question of power. For in His Universal Plan, all are safeguarded. But man's destiny, as far as we can see, is noble to the highest degree *(Cf.* 45:13).

3606 Allah's grace and bounties work for us at all times. Sometimes we see them, and sometimes we do not In things which we can apprehend with our senses, we can see Allah's grace, but even in them, sometimes it works beyond the sphere of our knowledge. In the inner or spiritual world, sometimes, when our vision is clear, we can see it working, and often we are not conscious of it, but it works all the same.

3607 Such men lack knowledge, as they make no use of their intellects but are swayed by their passions; they lack guidance, as they are impatient of control; and the fruits of revelation, or spiritual insight, do not reach them, as they reject Faith and Revelation.

21. When they are told to follow the (Revelation) that Allah has sent down, they say: "Nay, we shall follow the ways that we found our fathers (following)."(3608) What! even if it is Satan beckoning them to the Penalty of the (Blazing) Fire?

3608 They do not realise that in the spiritual world, as in the physical world, there is constant progress for the live ones: they are spiritually dead, as they are content to stand on ancestral ways, many of them evil, and leading to perdition.

22. Whoever submits his whole self to Allah, and is a doer of good, has grasped indeed the most trustworthy handhold:(3609) and with Allah rests the End(3610) and Decision of (all) affairs.

3609 *Cf.* 2:256 and n. 301.

3610 *Cf.* 22:41, Everything goes back to Allah. He is our final Goal, as He is the final Goal of all things.

23. But if any reject Faith, let not his rejection grieve thee: to Us(3611) is their return, and We shall tell them the truth of their deeds: for Allah knows well all that is in (men´s) hearts.

3611 The man of God should not grieve because people reject Faith. He should do his duty and leave the rest to Allah. Every soul must return to Allah for its reckoning. Allah knows everything, and His Universal Plan is full of wisdom.

24. We grant them their pleasure for a little while:(3612) in the end shall We drive them to a chastisement unrelenting.

3612 *Cf.* 2:126. The respite in this life is of short duration. The ultimate Penalty of Evil is such as cannot be quenched. *Cf.* 14:17 . It will be too late then to repent.

25. If thou ask them, who it is that created the heavens and the earth.(3613) They will certainly say, "(Allah)". Say: "Praise be to Allah."(3614) But most of them understand not.

3613 *Cf.* 23:84-89, and 29:61 and n. 3493. Men will acknowledge that Allah created the heavens and the earth, and yet fail to understand the love and goodness of Allah in continuing to cherish and maintain them with His gifts. Even if they allow this, they sometimes yet fall short of the corollary, that He is the only One to be worshipped, and run after their own false gods in the shapes of their fancies and lusts. They do not do the duties which, if they rightly understood their own nature and position, they should take a delight in doing.

3614 This ejaculation expresses our satisfaction that at least this is recognised-that the Creator of the whole world is Allah. It is a pity mat they do not go further and recognise other facts and duties (see the last note).

26. To Allah belong all things in heaven and earth: verily Allah is He (that is) free of all wants, worthy of all praise.(3615)

3615 *Cf.* above, 31:12. There was begun the argument about showing gratitude to Allah, introducing Luqman's teaching and philosophy. Such gratitude is shown by our understanding His love and doing our duty to Him by serving our fellow-men. For Allah Himself is Free from all wants and is in no way dependent on our service. That argument has been illustrated in various ways. But now we are told that it can never be completed, for no human tongue or human resources can be adequate either to praise Him or to expound His Word.

27. And if all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet would not the Words(3616) of Allah be exhausted (in the writing): for Allah is Exalted in Power, full of Wisdom.

3616 *Words of Allah:* His wonderful Signs and Commandments are infinite and cannot be expressed if all the trees were made into pens, and all the wide Ocean, multiplied seven times, were made into ink. Any Book of His Revelation would deal with matters which man can understand and use in his life: there are mysteries beyond mysteries that man can never fathom. Nor would any praise that we could write with infinite resources be adequate to describe His power, glory, and wisdom.

28. And your creation or your resurrection is in no wise but as an individual soul:(3617) for Allah is He Who hears and sees (all things).

3617 Allah's greatness and infinitude are such that He can create and cherish not only a whole mass, but each individual soul, and He can follow its history and doings until the final judgement. This shows not only Allah's glory and omniscience and omnipotence: it also shows the value of each individual soul in His eyes, and lifts individual responsibility right up into relations with Him.

29. Seest thou not that Allah merges Night into Day(3618) and he merges Day into Night; that He has subjected the sun, and the moon (to his Law), each running its course for a term appointed; and that Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do?

3618 *Cf.* 22:61 and n. 2841. Even when we can form a conception of Allah's infinitude by His dealings with each individual in His Creation as in verse 28 above, it is still inadequate. What is an individual himself? What is his relation to the universal Laws of Allah? In outer nature we can see that there is no clear-cut line between night and day: each merges into the other. Yet the sun and the moon obey definite laws. Though they seem to go on forever. Yet their existence and duration themselves are but an atom in Allah's great universe. How much more "merging" and imperceptible gradation there is in the inner and spiritual world? Our actions themselves cannot be classified and ticketed and labelled when examined in relation to motives and circumstances. Yet they are like an open book before Allah.

30. That is because Allah is the (only) Reality, and because whatever else they invoke(3619) besides Him is Falsehood; and because Allah,- He is the Most High, Most Great.

3619 *Cf.* 22:62 and nn. 2842 and 2843. All the wonderful complexities, gradations, and nuances, that we find in Creation, are yet blended in one harmonious whole, that obeys Law and exemplifies Order. They therefore point to the One True God. He is the only Eternal Reality. Anything put up in competition or equality with Him is only Falsehood, for He is higher and greater than anything we can imagine. (R).

31. Seest thou not that the ships sail through the ocean by the Grace of Allah.- that He may show you of His Signs? Verily in this are Signs for all who constantly persevere(3620) and give thanks.

3620 Even the things that man makes are, as using the forces of Nature, evidence of the grace of Allah, *Who* has subdued these wonderful forces to the use of man. But this gift of mastery can only be understood and appreciated by constant perseverance, combined with a recognition of the divine gifts ("giving thanks"). *Sabbar is* an intensive form of *Sabrand* I have indicated it by the adverb "constantly".

32. When a wave covers them like the canopy (of clouds), they call to Allah, offering Him sincere devotion.(3621) But when He has delivered them safely to land, there are among them those that halt(3622) between (right and wrong). But none reject Our Signs except only a perfidious ungrateful (wretch)!

3621 *Cf.* 7:29 . Unlike the people mentioned in the last verse, who constantly seek Allah's help and give thanks for His mercies by using them aright and doing their duty, there is a class of men whose worship is merely inspired by terror. When they are in physical danger-the only kind of danger they appreciate-g.g-., in a storm at sea, they genuinely think of Allah. But once the danger is past, they become indifferent or wish to appear good while dallying with evil. See next verse.

3622 They halt between two opinions. They are not against good, but they will not eschew evil. They are a contrast to those who "constantly persevere and give thanks". But such an attitude amounts really to "perfidious ingratitude".

33. O mankind! do your duty to your Lord, and fear (the coming of) a Day when no father can avail aught for his son, nor a son avail aught for his father.(3623) Verily, the promise of Allah is true: let not then this present life deceive you, nor let the Chief Deceiver(3624) deceive you about Allah.

3623 On the Day of Reckoning no one can help another. The most loving father cannot help his son be a substitute for him, and *vice versa.* Each will have his own personal responsibilities.

3624 The Chief Deceiver is the Power of Evil. It may make us forget that Time is fleeting and delude us by suggesting that the Reckoning may not come, whereas it is certain to come, because Allah's promise is true. We must not play with Time nor be deceived by appearances. The Day may come today or tomorrow or when we least expect it (*Cf.* 35:5).

34. Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah (alone). It is He Who sends down rain, and He Who knows what is in the wombs.(3625) Nor does any one know what it is that he will earn on the morrow:(3626) Nor does any one know in what land he is to die. Verily with Allah is full knowledge and He is acquainted (with all things).(3627)

3625 The question of Knowledge or Mystery governs both clauses here, *viz.:* Rain and Wombs. In fact it governs all the five things mentioned in this verse: *viz.* (1) The Hour; (2) Rain; (3) the Birth of a new Life (Wombs); (4) our Physical Life from day to day; (5) our Death. See n. 3627 below. As regards Rain we are asked to contemplate how and when it is sent down. The moisture may be sucked up by the sun's heat in the Arabian Sea or the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean near East Africa, or in the Lake Region in Central Africa . The winds drive it hither and thither across thousands of miles, or it may be, only short distances. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." No doubt it obeys certain physical Laws established by Allah, but how these Laws are interlocked, one with another! Meteorology, gravity, hydrostatics and dynamics, climatology, hygrometry, and a dozen other sciences are involved, and no man can completely master all of them, and yet this relates to only one of the millions of facts in physical nature, which are governed by Allah's Knowledge and Law. The whole vegetable kingdom is primarily affected by Rain.

The mention of Wombs brings in the mystery of animal life, embryology, sex, and a thousand other things. Who can tell-to take man alone-whether the child conceived is male or female, how long it will remain in the womb, whether it will be born alive, what sort of new individual it will be-a blessing or a curse to its parents, or to Society?

3626 "Earn" here, as elsewhere, means not only "earn one's livelihood" in a physical sense but also to reap the consequences (good or ill) of one's conduct generally. The whole sentence practically means: "no man knows what the morrow may bring forth."

3627 See the five Mysteries summed up in n. 3625 above. The Argument is about the mystery of Time and Knowledge. We are supposed to know things in ordinary life. But what does that knowledge amount to in reality? Only a superficial acquaintance with things. And Time is even more uncertain. In the case of rain, which causes vegetable life to spring up, or in the case of new animal life, can we answer with precision questions as to When or How or Wherefore? So about questions of our life from day to day or of our death. These are great Mysteries, and full knowledge is with Allah only. How much more so in the case of the *Ma'ad,* the Final House, when all true values will be restored and the balance redressed? It is certain, but the When and the How are known to Allah alone.



32. Al Sajdah (The Prostration)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A. L. M.(3628)

3628 See 1:25 to 2:1, and Introduction to S. 30.

2. (This is) the Revelation of the Book in which there is no doubt,-(3629) from the Lord of the Worlds.

3629 By the time of Prophet the earlier Book of Revelation had been corrupted by human ignorance or selfishness or fraud, or misinterpreted or lost altogether. There were sects violently disputing with each other as to their true meaning. Such doubts had to be set at rest and they were set at rest by the revelation of the Qur'an. The Quranic inspiration came directly from Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and did not consist merely of human conjecture or a reconstructed philosophy, in which there is always room for doubt or dispute. *Cf.* also 2:2.

3. Or(3630) do they say, "He has forged it"? Nay, it is the Truth from thy Lord, that thou mayest admonish a people to whom no warner has come before thee: in order that they may receive guidance.(3631)

3630 The force of "or" *(am* in Arabic) is that the only alternative to the acceptance of the Book as a divine revelation is the supposition that it was a forgery by the Prophet. But this supposition is absurd on the face of it because (1) Quraysh, his critics, knew him to be an honest and truthful man; (2) he was unlettered, and such a Book would have been beyond his powers as a simple unlettered Arab, unless Allah inspired it; and (3) there was a definite reason for its coming as it did, because the Arabs had received no Messenger before him and Allah has sent Messengers to every nation.

3631 The Arabs very much needed guidance for themselves, and the advent of a World Prophet through them was what might have been expected in view of the past course of Allah's Revelations.

4. It is Allah Who has created the heavens and the earth, and all between them, in six Days,(3632) and is firmly established on the Throne (of authority);(3633) ye have none, besides Him, to protect or intercede (for you): will ye not then receive admonition?

3632 *Six Days:* see n. 1031, to 7:54 . The "Day" does not mean a day as we reckon it, *viz.:* one apparent course of the sun round the earth, for it refers to conditions which began before the earth and the sun were created. In verse 5 below, a Day is compared to a thousand years of our reckoning, and in 70:4 to 50,000 years. These figures "as we reckon" have no relation to "timeless Time", and must be taken to mean very long Periods, or Ages, or Aeons. See further 41:9-12, and notes.

3633 *Cf.* 10:3, n. 1386. Allah created the World as we see it in six great Stages. But after the initial creation, He is still in authority and directs and controls all affairs. He has not delegated His powers to others, and Himself retired. Also see 7:54 .

5. He rules (all) affairs from the heavens to the earth: in the end will (all affairs) go up(3634) to Him, on a Day, the space whereof will be (as) a thousand years of your reckoning.

3634 How could the immense mystery of Time behind our ideas of it be enforced on our minds better? Our Day may be a thousand or fifty thousand years, and our years in proportion. In the immense Past was Allah's act of creation: it still continues, for He guides, rules, and controls all affairs: and in the immense Future all affairs will go up to Him, for He will be the Judge, and His restoration of all values will be as a Day or an Hour or the Twinkling of an eye; and yet to our idea it will be a thousand years!

6. Such is He, the Knower of all things, hidden and open, the Exalted (in power), the Merciful;-(3635)

3635 Allah's attributes, then, may be summed up with reference to knowledge, Power, and Mercy. Where our knowledge is partial and uncertain, His is complete and certain. Where our power often falls short of the carrying out of our will, or needs the help of Time, His is complete and counters ours with His Will. Where our mercy seems to be bounded by or opposed to justice, His is absolute and unconditioned.

7. He Who has made everything which He has created(3636) most good: He began the creation of man with (nothing more than) clay,(3637)

3636 Allah's creation in itself is good; it is beautiful in proper proportions, and adapted for the functions it has to perform. There is no evil or disorder in it. Such evil or disorder as creeps in is due to man's will (as far as the world of man is concerned), and spiritual Teaching is directed to train and cure that will and bring it into conformity with the Universal Order and Plan.

3637 Man is asked to contemplate his own humble beginning. His material body (apart from life) is a piece of earth or clay, which is another term for primeval matter. Matter is therefore the first stage, but even matter was not self-created. It was created by Allah.

8. And made his progeny from a quintessence of the nature of a fluid despised:(3638)

3638 Then comes life and the reproduction of life. We are still looking at the purely physical aspect, but it is now a stage higher; it is an animal. Its reproduction is through the sperm or semen, which is a quintessence of every part of the body of man. Yet it issues from the same part of his body as the urine, and is therefore despicable in man's sight. It is a living cell or cells, summing up so much ancestral life-history. *Cf.* 23:12, and n. 2872.

9. But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of(3639) His spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling(3640) (and understanding): little thanks do ye give!

3639 The third stage is indicated by "fashioned him in due proportion". *Cf.* 15:29 . After the fertilisation of the ovum by the sperm, an individual life conies into existence, and it is gradually fashioned into shape; its limbs are formed; its animal life begins to function; all the beautiful adaptations come into play. The fourth stage here mentioned is that of distinctive Man, into whom Allah's spirit is breathed. Then he rises higher than animals.

3640 As a complete man he gets the higher faculties. The five animal senses I understand to be included in the third stage. But in the fourth stage he rises higher and is addressed in the second person, "you," instead of the third person "him". He has now the spiritual counterpart of hearing *(i.e.,* the capacity to hear Allah's Message) and seeing (i.e., the inner vision), and feeling the nobler heights of love and understanding the bearings of the inner life (both typified by the Heart). Yet with all these gifts, what thanks does unregenerate or corrupted man give to Allah? *(Cf.* 23:12-14 and 32:7-9)

10. And they say: "What! when we lie, hidden and lost, in the earth, shall we indeed be in a Creation renewed?(3641) Nay, they deny the Meeting with their Lord.

3641 *Cf.* 13:5. It has been the cry of Materialists and Sceptics through the ages not only to bound their horizon with this brief life, but to deny dogmatically that there can be a future life. Here "they" refers to those "who give little thanks" to Allah, mentioned in the last verse. The argument used against them is: if Allah can produce such a wonderful creation the first time, why can He not make it again? That points to the possibility: our own general inner hope and expectation of a future life, coupled with Faith in Allah's work, is the ground of our certainty. (R).

11. Say: "The Angel of Death, put in charge of you, will (duly) take your souls(3642) then shall ye be brought back to your Lord."

3642 If death is certain, as it is, and this life by itself in no way satisfies our instincts and expectations, we may be sure that the agency which separates our soul from our bodies will bring us into the new world. If we believe in a soul at all-the very foundation of Religion—we must believe in a Future, without which the soul has no meaning.

12. If only thou couldst see when the guilty ones will bend low their heads before their Lord, (saying:) "Our Lord! We have seen and we have heard:(3643) Now then send us back (to the world): we will work righteousness: for we do indeed (now) believe."

3643 In life on the new plane, there will be no room for deception or self-deception. The most hardened sinner will see the truth and the justice of the Day of Account. He will wish he could be sent back, but it will be too late. The world as we know it will have already passed away.

13. If We had so willed,(3644) We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance: but the Word from Me(3645) will come true, "I will fill Hell with Jinns and men all together."

3644 Could evil have been averted? Certainly everything is in Allah's power. If it had been His Will and Plan, He could have created a world in which there would have been no choice or will in any of His creatures. But that was not His Will and Plan. In the world as we see it, man has a certain amount of choice and free will. That being so, He has provided Signs and means of instruction for man, in order that man's will may be straight and pure. A necessary corollary will be Punishment for the infractions of His Law. That Punishment must come to pass, for Allah's Word is true and must be fulfilled *(Cf.* n. 30 and n. 3557).

3645 *Cf.* 11:119, n. 1623, and 7:18 , and see last note. Jinns are the evil spirits that tempt men, and the men who will suffer punishment will be those who have succumbed to their temptations.

14. "Taste ye then - for ye forgot the Meeting(3646) of this Day of yours, and We too will forget you - taste ye the Penalty of Eternity for your (evil) deeds!"

3646 *Cf.* n. 1029 to 7:51. "Forget" here is in the sense of "to ignore deliberately, to reject with scorn". In the sense of mistake or defect of knowledge it is inapplicable to the All-Perfect Being, for we are expressly told, "My Lord never errs, nor forgets": 20:52 .

15. Only those believe in Our Signs, who, when they are recited to them, fall down in adoration,(3647) and celebrate the praises of their Lord, nor are they (ever) puffed up with pride.

3647 *In adoration: Sujjadan,* or in a posture of prostration, expressive of deep humility and faith. This is the keyword of the Surah, which bears the title of *Al Sajdah.* All the Signs of Allah lead our thoughts upwards towards Him, and when they are expounded, our attitude should be one of humble gratitude to Allah. At this passage it is usual to make a prostration. (R).

16. Their limbs do forsake(3648) their beds of sleep, the while they call on their Lord, in Fear and Hope:(3649) and they spend (in charity) out of the sustenance which We have bestowed on them.

3648 *Junub:* sides, on which men sleep and turn in their sleep: I have translated this "limbs" for shortness. Holy men and women "breathless with adoration" shun soft, comfortable beds, and luxurious sleep. Their limbs are better exercised in offices of devotion and prayer, especially by night. Commentators specially refer this to Prayers called *Tahajjud,* which are offered after midnight in the small hours of the morning, in twelve *Rak'as.*

3649 *In Fear and Hope:* in spiritual fear lest their dedication to Allah should not be sufficiently worthy to be accepted, and a spiritual longing or hope that their shortcomings will be overlooked by the Mercy of Allah. And their adoration is not shown only in Prayer, but also in practical Service and Charity, out of whatever gifts they may have received from Allah.

17. Now no person knows what delights of the eye(3650) are kept hidden (in reserve) for them - as a reward for their (good) deeds.

3650 *Delights of the eye:* an idiom for that which pleases most and gives most satisfaction. In our present state we can scarcely imagine the real Bliss that will come to us in the Future.

18. Is then the man who believes no better than the man who is rebellious and wicked?(3651) Not equal are they.

3651 The Future of the two classes-the Blessed and the Wicked-is described in verses 19-22.

19. For those who believe and do righteous deeds are Gardens as hospitable(3652) homes, for their (good) deeds.

3652 A home brings before our minds a picture of peace and happiness. When to it are added honour and hospitality, it adds further to the idea of happiness.

20. As to those who are rebellious and wicked, their abode will be the Fire: every time(3653) they wish to get away therefrom, they will be forced thereinto, and it will be said to them: "Taste ye the Penalty of the Fire, the which ye were wont to reject as false."

3653 *Cf.* 22:22 . Just as the Garden is a type of Bliss, so is the Fire a type of Penalty and suffering. There will be no getting away from it. What will be the thoughts of those who had earned it? "We used to reject the idea of the Consequences as mere chimera: and now we find it to be true!" What will be their feelings then? How will they like it!

21. And indeed We will make them taste of the Penalty of this (life) prior to(3654) the supreme Penalty, in order that they may (repent and) return.

3654 The final Penalty is to come in the Hereafter. There is no doubt about it. But before it comes, a minor Penalty comes in this very life. It may be in some kind of misfortune, or it may be in the pangs of a tortured conscience or secret sorrow. But this minor Penalty may be really a mercy, as it gives them a chance of repentance and amendment.

22. And who does more wrong than one to whom are recited the Signs of his Lord, and who then turns away(3655) therefrom? Verily from those who transgress We shall exact (due) Retribution.

<u>3655</u> The worst and most hardened sinner is the man to whom Allah's Signs are actually brought home and who yet prefers Evil and turns away from the Light of Allah. The Signs may be in the words and guidance of a great Teacher or in some minor sorrow or warning, which he disregards with contumely. Or it may be a catastrophic blow to his conscience, which should open his eyes, but from which he deliberately refuses to profit. The penalty—the Nemesis—must necessarily come eventually.

23. We did indeed aforetime give the Book to Moses:(3656) be not then in doubt of its reaching (thee):(3657) and We made it a guide to the Children of Israel.

<u>3656</u> *The Book* is not here co-extensive with Revelation. Moses had, revealed to him, a Law, a *shari'ah,* which was to guide his people in all the practical affairs of their life. Jesus, after him, was also inspired by Allah: but his *Injil* or Gospel contained only general principles and not a Code or *shari'ah.* The Prophet was the next one to have a *shan'ah* or "Book" in that sense: for the Qur'an contains both a Code and general principles. This Surah is a Makkan Surah. The Code came later in MadTnah. But he is given the assurance that he will also have a Code, to supersede the earlier Law, and complete the Revelation of Allah.

<u>3657</u> *Its reaching (thee): liqa'ihi* Commentators differ as to the construction of the pronoun *hi,* which may be translated either "its" or "his". I construe it to refer to "the Book", as that gives the most natural meaning, as explained in the last note.

24. And We appointed, from among them, leaders, giving guidance(3658) under Our command, so long as they persevered with patience and continued to have faith in Our Signs.

<u>3658</u> The series of Judges, Prophets, and Kings in Israel continued to give good guidance, in accordance with Allah's Law, as long as the people continued in Faith and Constancy (persevering patience). When that condition ceased, Allah's grace was withdrawn and the people broke up into wrangling sects and practically suffered national annihilation.

25. Verily thy Lord will judge between them on the Day of Judgment, in the matters wherein they differ (among themselves)(3659)

<u>3659</u> These wrangles and disputes among them will continue until the Day of Judgement, but meantime a new *Ummah* (that of Islam) will arise and take its place, with a universal and unified Message for mankind.

26. Does it not teach them a lesson, how many generations We destroyed before them, in whose dwellings they (now) go to and fro?(3660) Verily in that are Signs: Do they not then listen?(3661)

<u>3660</u> If a nation gone astray could only learn from the history of earlier nations that were destroyed for their evil! They could see vestiges of them in their daily goings to and fro: the Jews could see vestiges of the Philistines, Amalekites, etc. in Palestine , and the pagan Arabs, of the 'Ad and Thamud in Arabia .

<u>3661</u> *Listen: i.e.,* listen to the warnings conveyed in Allah's Signs. Notice how naturally the transition is effected from the physical to the spiritual-from the ruined physical vestiges of ungodly nations on this earth to the more intangible signs conveyed by History and Revelation. Here the sense of Hearing is mentioned, both in its physical and its metaphysical or spiritual aspect. In the next verse the sense of Sight is mentioned in both aspects.

27. And do they not see that We do drive Rain(3662) to parched soil (bare of herbage), and produce therewith crops, providing food for their cattle and themselves? Have they not the vision?(3663)

<u>3662</u> Again, as in the last verse, there is an easy transition from the physical to the spiritual. In physical nature there may be parched soil, which is to all intents and purposes dead. Allah sends rain, and the dead soil is converted into living land producing rich crops of fodder and corn, nuts and fruits, to satisfy the hunger of man and beast. So in the spiritual world. The dead man is revivified by Allah's grace and mercy through His Revelation. He becomes not only an asset to himself but to his dependents and those around him.

<u>3663</u> The verse begins with "do they not *see?" (a wa lam yaraw),* a physical act. It ends with "have they not the *vision?"* (*afala yubsirun)* , a matter of spiritual insight. This is parallel to the two kinds of "hearing" or "listening", explained in n. 3661 above.

28. They say: "When will this decision be, if ye(3664) are telling the truth?"

<u>3664</u> The Unbelievers may say: "If all this which you say is true, tell us when this final restoration of Realities, Life and true Values will come about." The answer is: "If you mean that you will postpone your repentance and reform till then, it will be no use: it will be too late for repentance, and no respite will be granted *then:* this is the Respite, and this is your chance."

29. Say: "On the Day of Decision, no profit will it be to Unbelievers if they (then) believe! nor will they be granted a respite."

30. So turn away from them, and wait: they too(3665) are waiting.

<u>3665</u> Read 6:158 and n. 984 as commentary on this. There it is said to the Unbelievers: "Wait ye: we too are waiting. "Here the Righteous one is told: "Wait (thou): they too are waiting." The reversal of the order is appropriate: in each case the person (or persons) addressed is mentioned first. *Cf.* also 7:71.



33. Al Ahzab (The Confederates)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. O Prophet! Fear Allah, and hearken not to the Unbelievers(3666) and the Hypocrites: verily Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom.

<u>3666</u> The fifth year A.H. was a critical year in the external history of early Islam, and this Surah must be read in the light of the events that then took place. As explained in the Introduction, the Grand Confederacy against Islam came and invested Madinah and failed utterly. It consisted of the Makkan Unbelievers, the desert Arabs of Central Arabia, the Jews previously expelled for treachery from Madinah, the Jews remaining in Madinah, and the Hypocrites led by 'Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, who have already been described in 9:43-110. Their bond of union was the common hatred of Islam and it snapped under the reverses they met. It is important to note three points. (1) The Jews as a body now lost their last chance of bearing the standard of Islam: the best of them had already accepted the renewal of Allah's Message. (2) A definite status was given to the Prophet's household, after

the slanders on 'A'ishah had been stilled (24:11-26), and the true position of the Mothers of the Believers had been cleared. (3) A further exposition of the purity of sexual relations was given, based on the story of Zaynab, the "Mother of the Poor". These points will be referred to in later notes.

2. But follow that which comes to thee by inspiration from thy Lord: for Allah is well acquainted(3667) with (all) that ye do.

3667 In the most adverse circumstances, in the midst of the assaults of Evil, the plots of treason and hypocrisy, the darts of slander and false charges, and stupid superstitions and taboos, the Prophet of Allah should steer his course steadily according to Allah's Law and not fear human evil, in whatever form it appears. Men may misjudge, but Allah knows all. Men may try to overthrow Good, but Wisdom is with Allah. (R).

3. And put thy trust in Allah, and enough is Allah(3668) as a disposer of affairs.

3668 We must wholly trust Allah: He is the true and efficient Guardian of all interests. *Cf.* 4:81, and n. 600.

4. Allah has not made for any man two hearts(3669) in his (one) body: nor has He made your wives whom ye divorce by Zihar(3670) your mothers: nor has He made your adopted sons(3671) your sons. Such is (only) your (manner of) speech by your mouths. But Allah tells (you) the Truth, and He shows the (right) Way.

3669 *Two hearts in his (one) breast:* two inconsistent attitudes: such as serving Allah and Mammon; or subscribing to both Truth and Superstition; or hypocritically pretending one thing and intending another. Such a thing is against Allah's Law and Will. Apart from the condemnation of general hypocrisy, two pagan customs of the Times of Ignorance are mentioned, and their iniquity pointed out. See the notes 3670 and 3671. Nor can a man love two women with equal love; hence the injustice of marrying more than one wife; see the second clause in 4:3. (R).

3670 This was an evil Arab custom, by which the husband selfishly deprived his wife of her conjugal rights and yet kept her to himself like a slave without her being free to remarry. He pronounced words importing that she was like his mother. After that she could not demand conjugal rights but was not free from his control and could not contract another marriage. See also 58:1-5, where this is condemned in the strongest terms and punishment is promised for it. A man sometimes said such words in a fit of anger: they did not affect him, but they degraded her position.

3671 If a man called another's son "his son", it might create complications with natural and normal relationships if taken too literally. It is pointed out that it is only in men's mouths, and should not be taken literally. The truth is the truth and cannot be altered by men's adopting "sons". "Adoption" in the technical sense is not allowed in Muslim Law. Those who have been "wives of your sons proceeding from your loins" are within the Prohibited Degrees of marriage; 4:23 ; but this does not apply to "adopted" sons.

5. Call them by (the names of) their fathers: that is juster in the sight of Allah. But if ye know not(3672) their father´s (names, call them) your Brothers in faith, or your maulas. But there is no blame on you if ye make(3673) a mistake therein: (what counts is) the intention of your hearts: and Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

3672 Freedmen were often called after their master's name as the "son of so and so". When they were slaves, perhaps their fathers' names were lost altogether. It is more correct to speak of them as the *Mawtd* of so and so. But *Mawla* in Arabic might also imply a close relationship of friendship: in that case, too, it is better to use the right term instead of the term "son". "Brother" is not objectionable because "Brotherhood" is used in a wider sense than "fatherhood", and is not likely to be misunderstood.

3673 What is aimed at is to destroy the superstition of erecting false relationships to the detriment or loss of true blood relations. It is not intended to penalise an unintentional slip in the matter, and indeed even if a man deliberately calls another his son or father, who is not his son or father, out of politeness or affections, "Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful". It is the action of mischievous parties which is chiefly reprehended, if they intend false insinuations. A mere mistake on their part does not matter. (R).

6. The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves,(3674) and his wives are(3675) their mothers. Blood-relations among each other have closer personal ties, in the Decree of Allah. Than (the Brotherhood of) Believers and Muhajirs:(3676) nevertheless do ye what is just to your closest friends: such is the writing in the Decree (of Allah..

3674 In spiritual relationships the Prophet is entitled to more respect and consideration than blood-relations. The Believers should follow him rather than their fathers or mothers or brothers, where there is conflict of duties. He is even nearer-closer to our real interests-thari our own selves. In some Qiraahs, like that of Ubayy ibn Ka'ab, occur also the words "and he is a father of them", which imply his spiritual relationship and connection with the words "and his wives are their mothers". Thus his spiritual fatherhood would be contrasted pointedly with the repudiation of the vulgar superstition of calling any one like Zayd ibn Harthah by the appellation Zayd ibn Muhammad (33:40): such an application is really disrespectful of the Prophet.

3675 See last note. This Surah establishes the dignity and position of the Prophet's wives, who had a special mission and responsibility as Mothers of the Believers. They were not to be like ordinary women: they had to instruct women in spiritual matters, visit and minister to those who were ill or in distress, and do other kindly offices in aid of the Prophet's mission.

3676 No man should deprive his blood-relations of such rights of maintenance and property as they might have. The community of Believers, inhabitants of Madinah and those who had migrated to Madinah from Makkah, also had their mutual rights, but they were not to be put forward as an excuse to defeat the prior rights of natural relationships. In the early MadTnah days, Ansar were allowed to inherit from Muhajirs whose natural relations had not emigrated, but this practice was discontinued when normal relations were re-established between Makkah and MadTnah.

7. And remember We took from the prophets their Covenant:(3677) As (We did) from thee: from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary: We took from them a solemn covenant:

3677 *Cf.* 3:81. There is an implied covenant on all created things to follow Allah's Law, which is the law of their being: see 5:1. But there is a special implied covenant with all Prophets, strict and solemn, that they shall carry out their mission, proclaim Allah's Truth without fear or favour, and be ever ready in His service in all circumstances. That gives them their position and dignity as explained in the last verse, and their tremendous responsibilities in respect of the people whom they come to instruct and lead to the right Path.

8. That (Allah) may question the (custodians) of Truth concerning the Truth they (were charged with):(3678) And He has prepared for the Unbelievers a grievous Penalty.

3678 The men to whom Allah's Truth has been committed for promulgation will be asked in the Hereafter how the Truth fared in the world-how it was received, who opposed it, and who assisted it. Like all trustees, they will have to give a full account of their trust. Allah knows all, and it will not add to His information. But it will be evidence for and against those to whom it was preached, so that the responsibility of those who dishonoured it may be duly enforced. The primary custodians of spiritual Truth are the Prophets, but in descending degrees all men to whom Allah's Message comes are included.

9. O ye who believe! Remember the Grace of Allah, (bestowed) on you, when there came down on you hosts (to overwhelm you):(3679) But We sent against them(3680) a hurricane and forces that ye saw not: but Allah sees (clearly)(3681) all that ye do.

3679 In this verse is summed up the beginning and the end of the fateful struggle of the Siege of Madinah in A.H. 5. The composition of the unhallowed Confederacy that came to destroy Islam is referred to in the Introduction. They came with a force of ten to twelve thousand fighting men, an unprecedented army for that time and country. The battle is known as the Battle of the Trench.

3680 After a close investment of two to four weeks, during which the enemy were disheartened by their ill success, there was a piercing blast of the cold east wind. It was a severe winter, and February can be a *very* cold mondi in Madinah, which is about 3,000 feet above the sea level. The enemy's tents were torn up, their fires were extinguished, the sand and rain beat in their faces, and they were terrified by the portents against them. They had already well nigh fallen out amongst themselves, and beating a hasty retreat, they melted away. The Madinah fighting

strength was no more than 3,000, and the Jewish tribe of the Banu Qurayzah who were in their midst was a source of weakness as they were treacherously intriguing with the enemy. And further there were the Hypocrites: see n. 3666 above. But there were hidden forces that helped the Muslims. Besides the forces of nature there were moral forces-mutual distrust and bickering in the enemy camp, and on the other side, perfect discipline among the real Muslims, and the superb leadership of the Prophet.

3681 Allah sees everything. Therefore we may conclude that the discipline and moral fervour of the Muslims, as well as the enemy's insincerities, intrigues, and reliance on brute force, were all contributory causes to his repulse, under Allah's dispensation. There were many hidden causes which neither party saw clearly.

10. Behold! they came on you from above you and from below you, and behold, the eyes became dim and the hearts gaped(3682) up to the throats, and ye imagined various (vain) thoughts about Allah.

3682 The psychology of the combatants is described with matchless vigour in the Holy Test. The onrush of the enemy was really tremendous. The Trench round MadTnah was between the defenders and the huge attacking force, which had some high ground behind them "above you": when any of them came through the valley or over the Trench they seemed to come from below. The showers of arrows and stone on both sides must also have seemed to come from the air.

11. In that situation were the Believers tried: they were shaken as by a tremendous shaking.

12. And behold! The Hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease (even) say: "(Allah) and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusion!"(3683)

3683 Before this year's mass attack on Madinah, the Muslims had successfully reached the Syrian border on the north, and there were hopes of reaching Yemen in the south. The Prophet had seen signs of expansion and victory for the Muslims. Now that they were shut within the Trench on the defensive, the Hypocrites taunted them with having indulged in delusive hopes. But the event showed that the hopes were *not* delusive. They were realised beyond expectations in a few years.

13. Behold! A party among them said: "Ye men of Yathrib! ye cannot stand (the attack)! therefore go back!" And a band of them ask for leave of the Prophet, saying, "Truly our houses(3684) are bare and exposed," though they were not exposed they intended nothing but to run away.

3684 All the fighting men of Madinah had come out of the City and camped in the open space between the City and the Trench that had been dug all round. The disaffected Hypocrites sowed defeatist rumours and pretended to withdraw for the defence of their homes, though their homes were not exposed, and were fully covered by the vigilant defensive forces inside the Trench.

14. And if an entry had been effected to them(3685) from the sides of the (city), and they had been incited to sedition, they would certainly have brought it to pass, with none but a brief delay!

3685 The brunt of all the fighting was on the north side, but the whole Trench was guarded. At one or two points enemy warriors did break within the circuit of the Trench, but they were soon disposed of. 'Ali particularly distinguished himself in many fights, wearing the Prophet's own sword and armour. If any of the enemy had been able to penetrate into the City, the disaffected element, which was only sitting on the fence, would have risen against the Muslims at once-with no delay except what might have been necessary to put on their armour and arms.

15. And yet they had already covenanted with Allah not to turn their backs, and a covenant(3686) with Allah must (surely) be answered for.

3686 Apparently, after the battle of Uhud, certain men who had then shown cowardice were forgiven on undertaking that they would behave better next time. A solemn promise made to the Messenger of Allah is a promise to Allah, and it cannot be broken with impunity.

16. Say: "Running away will not profit you if ye are running away from death(3687) or slaughter; and even if (ye do escape), no more than a brief (respite) will ye be allowed to enjoy!"

3687 The coward in a fight does not usually save himself from death. He is subject, after desertion, to the fury both of the enemy and of his own side for cowardice and desertion. Assuming that he did escape with his life, where could he go to? The brand of cowardice will be on him, and he will be subject to the vengeance of his own people. In any case, his life would be in ignominy and would be brief, and he would have lost irretrievably the meed of valour.

17. Say: "Who is it that can screen you from Allah if it be His wish to give you punishment or to give you Mercy?"(3688) Nor will they find for themselves, besides Allah, any protector or helper.

3688 It is still worse if the cowardice or desertion is shown in a Cause, which because of the high issues of truth and justice, may be called the Cause of Allah. How can anyone escape Allah's Punishment? And in the same way, how can anyone prevent another from obtaining Allah's mercy by repentance and amendment? The better path, therefore, is to stand firm in Allah's Way, and if you fail through human weakness, to repent and seek Allah's Mercy. *Cf.* 33:24, and n. 3698 below.

18. Verily Allah knows those among you who keep back (men) and those who say to their brethren, "Come along to us", but come not to the fight except for just a little while.

19. Covetous over you.(3689) Then when fear comes, thou wilt see them looking to thee, their eyes revolving, like (those of) one over whom hovers death: but when the fear is past, they will smite you with sharp tongues, covetous(3690) of goods. Such men have no faith, and so Allah has made their deeds(3691) of none effect: and that is easy for Allah.(3692)

3689 *Ashihhah:* covetous, grasping, miserly. Here the meaning is twofold: (1) they spare themselves in the fight as compared with you; they are miserly with themselves as against you; they contribute little either in personal effort or with their money and resources; and (2) they covet any gains made or booty won, on the part of the real fighters.

3690 In time of danger; they would look to the Prophet for protection, and keep themselves snugly from the fight. When the danger is past, they will come and brag and wrangle and show their covetousness or greed for gain though they gave of themselves but sparingly.

3691 Even any good they may have done becomes vain because of their motives of envy, greed, and covetousness and their cowardice.

3692 It is not surprising that men's deeds fall as it were dead because there is no pure motive behind them. For men it may be difficult to probe motives, but it is easy for Allah, Whom hypocrisy or false show can never deceive.

20. They think that the Confederates have not withdrawn; and if the Confederates should come (again), they would wish they were in the deserts (wandering) among the Bedouins, and(3693) seeking news about you (from a safe distance); and if they were in your midst, they would fight but little.

3693 This completes the picture of the psychology of the Hypocrites, begun in verse 12. Let us analyse it. (1) When they first saw the enemy they were already in a defeatist mood, and thought all was over (verse 12). (2) Not content with disloyalty themselves, they tried to infect others, who made paltry excuses to withdraw from the fight (verse 13). (3) They were ready to betray the City to the enemy if the enemy had gained entrance (verse 14). (4) They forgot all the promises of fidelity which they had previously sworn (verse 15). (5) In their paltry calculations they forgot that cowardice in war does not pay (verses 16-17). (6) Without taking much part in the actual defence, they were ready to talk glibly and claim a lion's share in the fruits of the victory (verses 18-19). (7) Even when the enemy had withdrawn, their cowardly minds were still afraid that the enemy would return, and were already meditating what they would do in that case; perhaps they would dwell in the deserts and spy on Madinah from a safe distance: and if caught in Madinah they would fight little and intrigue much.

It was a miracle that with such men in their midst, the Prophet and his band won through.

21. Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is(3694) in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much(3695) in the Praise of Allah.

3694 We now have the psychology of the Believers-God-fearing men, led by that pattern of men and of leaders, Muhammad,

3695 *Cf.* 26:227: see especially the last clause of that verse in a Makkan Surah, which was amply fulfilled in Madinah.

22. When the Believers saw the Confederate forces, they said: "This is what Allah and His Messenger(3696) had promised us, and Allah and His Messenger told us what was true." And it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience.

3696 This is in contrast to what the Hypocrites said in verse 12 above. The divine promise of help and success is contingent upon our striving and faith. Nothing comes to the poltroon and the sceptical idler. Dangers and difficulties, and conflict with Evil, are foretold us, and we must meet them with fortitude and courage.

23. Among the Believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah. of them some have completed(3697) their vow (to the extreme), and some (still) wait: but they have never changed (their determination) in the least:

3697 In the fight for Truth were (and are) many who sacrificed their all-resources, knowledge, influence, life itself- in the Cause, and never wavered. If they won the crown of martyrdom, they were blessed. Such a one was Sa'd ibn Mu'adh,. the chief of the Aws tribe, the intrepid standard-bearer of Islam, who died of a wound he had received in the Battle of the Trench. Other heroes fought valiantly and lived, always ready to lay down their lives. Both classes were staunch, they never changed or wavered.

24. That Allah may reward the men of Truth for their Truth, and punish the Hypocrites if that be(3698) His Will, or turn to them in Mercy: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

3698 Before the Throne of Allah's Mercy there is always room for repentance and forgiveness, even after treason and crime: but the forgiveness will be according to Allah's Will and Plan, which willjudge the penitent's sincerity and capacity for good to the nicest degree in his favour. *Cf.* also 33:17 above.

25. And Allah turned back the Unbelievers for (all) their fury: no advantage(3699) did they gain; and enough is Allah for the believers in their fight. And Allah is full of Strength, able to enforce His Will.(3700)

3699 In spite of the mighty preparations and the great forces which the Makkans, in concert with the Central Arabian Bedouins, the discontented Jews, and the treacherous Hypocrites, brought to the siege of Madinah, all their plans were frustrated. Their fury availed them nothing. They departed in hot haste. This was the last and dying effort. The initiative thereafter lay with the forces of Islam.

3700 For the meaning of *'Aziz,* see n. 2818 to 22:40 .

26. And those of the people(3701) of the Book who aided them - Allah did take them down from their strongholds(3702) and cast terror into their hearts. (So that)(3703) some ye slew, and some(3704) ye made prisoners.

3701 The reference is to thejewish tribe of the Banu Qurayzah. They counted among the citizens of Madinah and were bound by solemn engagements to help in the defence of the city. But on the occasion of the Confederate siege by the Qurash and their allies, they intrigued with the enemies and treacherously aided them. Immediately after the siege was raised and the Confederates had fled in hot haste, the Prophet turned his attention to the treacherous "friends" who had betrayed his City in the hour of danger.

3702 The Banu Qurayzah (see last note) were filled with terror and dismay when Madinah was free from the Qurash danger. They shut themselves up in their castles about three or four miles to the east (or north east) of Madinah, and sustained a siege of 25 days, after which they surrendered, stipulating that they would abide by the decision of their fate at the hands of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, chief of the Aws tribe, with which they had been in alliance.

3703 Sa'd applied to them the J ewish Law of the Old Testament, not as strictly as the case warranted. In Deut. 20:10-18, the treatment of a city "which is very far off from thee" is prescribed to be comparatively more lenient than the treatment of a city "of the people, which the Lord thy God does give thee for an inheritance," *i.e.,* which is near enough to corrupt the religion of the Jewish people. The punishment for these is total annihilation: "thou shall save alive nothing that breatheth" (Deut. 20:16). The more lenient treatment for far-off cities is described in the next note. According to the Jewish standard, then, the Banu Qurayzah deserved total extermination-of men, women, and children. They were in the territory of MadTnah itself, and further they had broken their engagements and helped the enemy.

3704 Sa'd adjudged them the mildest treatment of the "far-off" cities which is thus described in the Jewish Law: "Thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: but the women and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself, and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee" (Deut. 20:13-14). The men of the Qurayzah were slain: the women were sold as captives of war: and their lands and properties were divided among the Muhajirs.

27. And He made you heirs of their lands, their houses, and their goods, and of a land which(3705) ye had not frequented (before). And Allah has power over all things.

3705 If this part of the Surah was revealed after the autumn of the Hijrah year 7, it refers to the result of the Khaybar expedition of that autumn. Khaybar is a Harrah or volcanic tract, well-watered with many springs issuing from its basaltic rocks. It has a good irrigation system and produces good harvests of grain and dates in its wet valleys, while the outcrop of rocks in the high ground affords sites for numerous fortresses. At present it is inhabited chiefly by men of the race of Bilal (the Abyssinian) who played a prominent part in the expedition. It is a sort of island in the deserts on the outskirts of Najd . In the Prophet's time there were Jewish colonies settled here, but they were a source of constant trouble, especially after the Siege of Madinah. It became a nest of all the hostile Jewish elements expelled for their treachery from elsewhere. Its capital, Khaybar, is about 90 miles due north of Madinah. Its inhabitants offered some resistance, and 'Ali, though he had just risen from a bed of illness, performed prodigies of valour. After its surrender, a land settlement was made, which retained the cultivators of the soil on the land, but brought them under control, so that no further focus of active hostility should remain near Madinah. The terms of the settlement will be found in the *Maghazi* of al Waqidi.

28. O Prophet! Say to thy Consorts: "If it be that ye desire the life of this World, and its glitter,- then come!(3706) I will provide for your enjoyment and set you free in a handsome manner.

3706 We now come to the subject of the position of the Consorts of Purity (*azwaj mutahharat),* the wives of the Prophet. Their position was not like that of ordinary women or ordinary wives. They had special duties and responsibilities. The only youthful marriage of the Prophet was his first marriage-that with Khadijah, the best of women and the best of wives. He married her fifteen years before he received the call to Prophethood; the married life lasted for twenty-five years, and their mutual devotion was of the noblest, judged by spiritual as well as social standards. During her life he had no other wife, which was unusual for a man of his standing among his people. When she died, his age was 50, and but for two considerations, he would probably never have married again, as he was most abstemious in his physical life. The two considerations which governed his later marriages were: (1) compassion and clemency, as when he wanted to provide for suffering widows, who could not be provided for in any other way in that stage of society; some of them, like Sawdah, had issue by their former marriage, requiring protection; (2) help in his duties of leadership, with women, who had to be instructed and kept together in the large Muslim family, where women and men had similar social rights.'A'ishah, daughter of Abu Bakr, was clever and learned, and in Hadith she is an important authority on the life of the Prophet. Zaynab, daughter of Khuzaymah, was specially devoted to the poor: she was called the "Mother of the Poor". The other Zaynab, daughter of Jahsh, also worked for the poor, for whom she provided from the proceeds of her manual work, as she was skilled in leather work. But all the Consorts in their high position had to work and assist as Mothers of the Ummah. Theirs were not idle lives, like those of Odalisques, either for their own pleasure or the pleasure of their husband. They are told here that they had no place in the sacred Household if they merely wished for ease or worldly glitter. If such were the case, they could be divorced and amply provided for.

29. But if ye seek Allah and His Messenger, and the Home of the Hereafter, verily Allah has prepared for the well-doers amongst you(3707) a great reward.

3707 They were all well-doers. But being in their exalted position, they had extra responsibility, and they had to be specially careful to discharge it. In the same way, their reward would be "great", for higher services bring higher spiritual satisfaction, though they were asked to deny themselves some of the ordinary indulgences of life.

30. O Consorts of the Prophet! If any of you were guilty of evident unseemly conduct,(3708) the Punishment would be doubled to her, and that is easy for Allah.(3709)

3708 *Evident unseemly conduct: i.e.,* proved misconduct, as opposed to false slanders from enemies. Such slanders were of no account, but if any of them had behaved in an unseemly manner, it would have been a worse offence than in the case of ordinary women, on account of their special position. *(Cf.* 33:32). Of course none of them were in the least guilty.

3709 *Cf.* 33:19 and n. 3692. The punishment in this life for a married woman's unchastity is very severe: for adultery, public flogging with a hundred stripes, under 24:2; or for lewdness (see 4:15) imprisonment; or stoning to death for adultery, according to certain precedents established in Canon Law. But here the question is not about this kind of punishment or this kind of offence. Even minor indiscretions, in the case of women who were patterns of decorum, would have been reprehensible; and the punishment in the Hereafter is on a higher plane, which we can scarcely understand. But Allah can appreciate every shade of motive in us. More or less is possible there, which might not be possible in the rough and ready law which we administer here, (see also nn. 523-526 and nn. 2954-2960).

31. But any of you that is devout in the service of Allah and His Messenger, and works righteousness,- to her shall We grant her reward twice:(3710) and We have prepared for her a generous Sustenance.(3711)

3710 *Twice, i.e.,* once as a righteous woman and again as a Mother of the Believers, serving the believing women and thus showing her devotion to Allah and His Prophet.

3711 *Sustenance:* in the spiritual sense: all that is necessary to sustain her in happiness in her future life.

32. O Consorts of the Prophet! Ye are not like any of the (other) women:(3712) if ye do fear ((Allah)), be not too complacent of speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire: but speak ye a speech (that is) just.(3713)

3712 This is the core of the whole passage. The Prophet's Consorts were not like ordinary women, nor was their marriage an ordinary marriage, in which only personal or social considerations enter. They had a special position and special responsibilities, in the matter of guiding and instructing women who came into the fold of Islam. Islam is a Way of Life, and the Muslims are a family: women have as much place in Islam as men, and their intimate instruction must obviously be through women.

3713 While they were to be kind and gentle to all, they were to be guarded on account of their special position lest people might misunderstand or take advantage of their kindness. They were to make no vulgar worldly displays as in the times of Paganism.

33. And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance; and establish regular Prayer, and give regular Charity; and obey(3714) Allah and His Messenger. And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye Members(3715) of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless.

3714 Obedience to Allah's Law sums up all duties. Regular Prayer (seeking nearness to Allah) and Regular Charity (doing good to fellow-creatures) are mentioned as specially symbolical of our Religion.

3715 Notice the transition in this clause to the masculine gender, while before this the verbs and pronouns were in the feminine gender as referring to the Consorts. The statement in this clause is now more general including (besides the Consorts) the whole family, namely Fatimah the daughter, 'AIi the son-in-law, and their sons AI Hasan and Al Husayn, the beloved grandsons of the Prophet. The masculine gender is used generally, in speaking of a mixed assembly of men and women.

34. And recite(3716) what is rehearsed to you in your homes, of the Signs of Allah and His Wisdom: for Allah understands the finest mysteries and is well-acquainted (with them).(3717)

3716 The verb is *u dhkurna,* feminine gender, as referring to the *Azwaj* again. It means not only "remember" but "recite", "teach", "make known", "publish", the Message which ye learn at home from the Prophet, the fountain of spiritual knowledge. The "Signs of Allah" refer specifically to the verses of the Qur'an, and Wisdom to the resulting instruction derived therefrom.

3717 *Cf.* 22:63 and n. 2844. Allah's understanding is perfect in every detail, however minute. Therefore use His Revelation for every phase of life.

35. For Muslim men and women,- for believing men and women-(3718) for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give(3719) in Charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise,-(3720) for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.

3718 Islam, or submitting our will to Allah's Will, includes all the virtues, as particularly specified in this verse. See n. 3720.

3719 A number of Muslim virtues are specified here, but the chief stress is laid on the fact that these virtues are as necessary to women as to men. Both sexes have spiritual as well as human rights and duties in an equal degree, and the future "reward" of the Hereafter, *viz.,* Spiritual Bliss, is provided for the one as for the other.

3720 The virtues referred to are: (1) Faith, hope, and trust in Allah, and in His benevolent government of the world; (2) devotion and service in practical life; (3) love and practice of truth, in thought and intention, word and deed; (4) patience and constancy, in suffering and in right endeavour; (5) humility, the avoidance of an attitude of arrogance and superiority; (6) charity, *i.e.,* help to the poor and unfortunate ones in life, a special virtue arising out of the general duty of service (No. 2); (7) self-denial, typically in food, but generally in all appetites; (8) chastity, purity in sex life, purity in motive, thought, word, and deed; and (9) constant attention to Allah's Message, and cultivation of the desire to get nearer to Allah.

36. It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any option about their decision:(3721) if any one disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path.

3721 We must not put our own wisdom in competition with Allah's wisdom. Allah's decree is often known to us by the logic of facts. We must accept it loyally, and do the best we can to help in our own way to carry it out. We must make our will consonant to Allah's Will. (R).

37. Behold! Thou didst say to one who had received the grace of Allah(3722) and thy favour: "Retain thou (in wedlock) thy wife, and fear Allah." But thou didst hide in thy heart(3723) that which Allah was about to make manifest: thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst(3724) fear Allah. Then when Zaid had dissolved (his marriage) with her, with the necessary(3725) (formality), We joined her in marriage to thee: in order that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the Believers in (the matter of) marriage with the wives(3726) of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with the necessary (formality) (their marriage) with them. And Allah's command must be fulfilled.

3722 This was Zayd, son of Harithah, one of the first to accept the faith of Islam. He was freedman of the Prophet, who loved him as a son and gave him in marriage to his own cousin Zaynab. The marriage however turned out unhappy. See next note.

3723 Zayd's marriage with the Prophet's cousin Zaynab, daughter of J ahsh, did not turn out happy. Zaynab the high-born looked down upon Zayd the freedman

who had been a slave. And he was not comely to look at. Bom were good people in their own ways, and both loved the Prophet, but there was mutual incompatibility, and this is fatal to married life. Zayd wished to divorce her, but the Prophet asked him to hold his hand, and he obeyed. She was closely related to the Prophet; he had given a handsome marriage gift on her marriage to Zayd; and people would certainly talk if such a marriage was broken off. But marriages are made on earth, not in heaven, and it is no part of Allah's Plan to torture people in a bond which should be a source of happiness but actually is a source of misery. Zayd's wish-indeed the mutual wish of the couple-was for the time being put away, but it became eventually an established fact, and everybody came to know of it. (R).

3724 All actual facts are referred to Allah. When the marriage is unhappy, Islam permits the bond to be dissolved, provided that all interests concerned are safeguarded. Apparently there was no issue here to be considered. Zaynab had to be considered, and she obtained the dearest wish of her heart in being raised to be a Mother of the Believers, with all the dignity and responsibility of that position. Seen. 3706 to 33:28 above.

3725 The *Iddah* or period of waiting after divorce (2:28 , and n. 254) was duly completed.

3726 The Pagan superstition and taboo about adopted sons had to be destroyed. See 33:4-5 and notes 3671-3672 above.

38. There can be no difficulty to the Prophet in what Allah has indicated to him(3727) as a duty. It was the practice (approved) of Allah amongst those of old that have passed away,(3728) And the command of Allah is a decree determined.(3729)

3727 See n. 3724 above.

3728 The next clause is parenthetical. Those words then connect on with verse 39. Among the people of the Book there was no taboo about adopted sons, as there was in Pagan Arabia.

3729 Allah's ordering of the world is always full of wisdom. Even our unhappiness and misery may actually have a great meaning for ourselves or others or both. If our first Plan seems to fail, we must not murmur and repine, but retrieve the position by adopting a course which appears to be the best position in the light of our duties as indicated by Allah. For Allah's Plan is framed on universal principles that cannot be altered by human action.

39. (It is the practice of those) who preach the Messages of Allah, and fear Him, and fear none but Allah. And enough is Allah to call (men) to account.(3730)

3730 Our responsibility is to Allah, not to men. Men's opinions may have a bearing in our own interpretation of duty, but when that duty is clear, our only course is to obey Allah rather than men.

40. Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets:(3731) and Allah has full knowledge of all things.

3731 When a document is sealed, it is complete, and there can be no further addition. The Prophet Muhammad closed the long line of Messengers. Allah's teaching is and will always be continuous, but there has been and will be no Prophet after Muhammad. The later ages will want thinkers and reformers, not Prophets. This is not an arbitrary matter. It is a decree full of knowledge and wisdom, "for Allah has full knowledge of all things."

41. O ye who believe! Celebrate the praises of Allah, and do this often;

42. And glorify Him morning and evening.

43. He it is Who sends(3732) blessings on you, as do His angels, that He may bring you out from the depths of Darkness into Light: and He is Full of Mercy to the Believers.(3733)

3732 *Blessings:* good wishes and mercies. Allah wishes well to all His creatures, and His angels carry out His work, for their will is in all things His Will. His chief and everlasting blessing is that He gives us a knowledge of the spiritual world, and helps us towards its attainment. For the symbolic meaning of Light and Darkness, see 24:35-40, and notes.

3733 His Mercies are for all His creatures, but for those who believe and trust in Him, there are special mercies, "a generous Reward" as in the next verse.

44. Their salutation on the Day they meet Him will be "Peace!"; and He has prepared for them a generous Reward.

45. O Prophet! Truly We have sent thee as a Witness, a Bearer(3734) of Glad Tidings, and Warner,-

3734 The Prophet was sent by Allah in five capacities. Three are mentioned in this verse, and the other two in the verse following. (1) He comes as a *Witness* to all men about the spiritual truths which had been obscured by ignorance or superstition, or by the dust of sectarian controversy. He did not come to establish a new religion or sect. He came to teach Religion. He is also a witness to Allah about men's doings and how they receive Allah's Message; see 4:41 and n. 560. (2) He comes as a Bearer of the *Glad Tidings of the* Mercy of Allah. No matter how far men may have transgressed, they have hope if they believe, repent, and live a good life. (3) He also comes as a *Warner to* those who are heedless. This life will not last. There is a Future Life, and that is all-important. See next note.

46. And as one who invites to Allah.s (grace) by His leave,(3735) and as a lamp spreading light.

3735 See last note. The two other capacities in which the Prophet was sent are here specified. (4) He comes as one who has a right to *invite* all men to repentance and the forgiveness of sins; but he does this, not of his own authority, but by the permission and authority given to him by Allah. This is said lest people may deny the Prophet as they did with other Prophets before him. The personal responsibility of each individual remains, but the Prophet can lead him on to the Right and help him. (5) The Prophet also comes as a *Light* of a Lamp *(Siraj)* to illuminate the whole world. In 71:16 and elsewhere the same word *(Siraj)* is used for the sun. The comparison is apt. When the sun appears, all the lesser lights pale before his light. And the Message of Islam, *i.e.,* of the Universal Religion, is to diffuse Light everywhere.

47. Then give the Glad Tidings to the Believers, that they shall have from Allah a very great Bounty.(3736)

3736 The light of Islam is the Biggest Bounty possible and if they truly understand it, they should glory in it.

48. And obey not (the behests) of the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and heed not their annoyances,(3737) but put thy Trust in Allah. For enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.

3737 Men of little or no Faith will often lay down the law and tell better men than themselves what to do. In case of refusal they shower insults and injuries. No attention is to be paid to them. It is their way. All will be right under the government of Allah.

49. O ye who believe! When ye marry believing women, and then divorce them before ye have touched them, no period of ´Iddah(3738) have ye to count in respect of them: so give them a present.(3739) And set them free in a handsome manner.(3740)

3738 See n. 254 to 2:228. The *Iddah* counts for three monthly courses, or if there are no courses, for three months (see 2:34 and 65:4).

3739 This present is held, by some, to be in addition to the half dower due to them under 2:237. If the dower had not been fixed, the gift would presumably be larger, and it would absorb the gift prescribed n 2:236.

3740 The gift should be given with good grace, and the freedom of the woman should not be interfered with in any way. If she chooses to marry again immediately, no obstacle should be placed in her path. On no pretext should she be allowed to remain doubtful about her freedom.

50. O Prophet! We have made lawful to thee(3741) thy wives to whom thou hast paid their dowers;(3742) and those whom thy right hand possesses out of the prisoners of war whom(3743) Allah has assigned to thee; and daughters of thy paternal uncles and aunts, and daughters of thy maternal uncles and aunts, who migrated(3744) (from Makka) with thee; and any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the

Prophet(3745) if the Prophet wishes to wed her;- this only for thee, and not for the Believers (at large); We know what We have appointed for them as to(3746) their wives and the captives whom their right hands possess- in order that(3747) there should be no difficulty for thee. And Allah is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful.(3748)

3741 This introduces no new exemption or privilege. Verses 50-52 merely declare the points in which, on account of the special circumstances (see n. 3706 above), the Prophet's marriages differed from those of ordinary Muslims. This is considered under four heads, which we shall examine in the four notes following.

3742 Head 1. Marriage with dower (4:4): this is the universal Muslim marriage. The difference in the Prophet's case was that there was no limitation to the number of four (4:3), and women of the People of the Book (5:5) were not among his wives, but only Believers. These points are not expressly mentioned here, but are inferred by his actual practice. Obviously women who are expected to instruct other women in Islam must be Muslims.

3743 Head 2. Women Prisoners of War: the same remark as the last note. The point does not now arise, as the whole condition and incidents of war have been altered and slavery has been abolished by international agreement.

3744 Head 3. These are first cousins, and not within the Prohibited Degrees of Marriage (see 4:23 -24). These are specially mentioned here by way of limitation. None of them could marry the Prophet unless she had performed the Hijrah with him. If she had not so performed it in spite of her close relationship, she could not be credited with any great fervour for Islam, or be considered suitable for instructing other women in Islam.

3745 Head 4. A believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet: obviously this case, like the last, is only applicable to the Prophet, and is hedged around with the limitations that the Prophet considers it a suitable and proper case of true service to the community, and not merely a sentimental woman's freak. Some Commentators think there was no such case. But others, with whom I agree, think that this applies to Zaynab bint Khuzaymah, who had dedicated herself to the poor and was called the Mother of the Poor (*Umm al masakin).* Similarly, the last head might possibly refer to Zaynab bint Jahsh, who was a daughter of the Prophet's paternal aunt, herself a daughter of 'Abd al Muttalib.

3746 The ordinary law of Muslim marriage will be found chiefly in 2:221-235, 4:19 -25, 4:34 -35, and 5:5.

3747 The words "this only for thee . . . right hands possess" are parenthetical, and the words "in order that. . ." connect on with the previous clauses beginning with "O Prophet, We have made lawful . . . wishes to wed her."

3748 Marriage is an important relationship not only in our physical life, but in our moral and spiritual life, and its effects extend not only to the parties themselves but to children and future generations. A number of special problems arise according to special circumstances. Every man and woman must seriously consider all sides of the question and must do the best in his or her power to temper instincts and inclinations with wisdom and guidance from Allah. Allah wishes to make every one's path easy, for He is indeed "Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful".

51. Thou mayest defer (the turn(3749) of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest: and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose (turn)(3750) thou hadst set aside. This were nigher to the cooling of the eyes,(3751) the prevention of their grief, and their satisfaction - that of all of them - with that which thou hast to give them:(3752) and Allah knows (all) that is in your hearts:(3753) and Allah is All- Knowing, Most Forbearing.

3749 In 4:3 it is laid down that more than one wife is not permissible "If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with them". In a Muslim household there is no room for a "favourite wife" in the sense that such a wife is recipient of favours denied to other wives. In the special circumstances of the Prophet there were more than one, and he usually observed the rule of equality with them, in other things as well as in the rotation of conjugal rights. But considering that his marriages, after he was invested with the Prophetic office, were mainly dictated by other than conjugal or personal considerations (see n. 3706, 33:28), the rotation could not always be observed, though he observed it as much as possible. This verse absolved him from absolute adherence to a fixed rotation. There are other interpretations, but I agree with most of the Commentators in the view I have explained. (R).

3750 Where the rotation was, for some reason, interfered with, it was permissible, by another interference with the usual rotation, to bring satisfaction to one who had been previously set aside. This was not only permitted, but commended, as tending to remove dissatisfaction and cheer and comfort the eyes and hearts of those who were disappointed in their turn.

3751 *Cooling the eyes:* an Arabic idiom for cheering and comforting eyes which yearn to see those they love. A verse of Zeb al Nisa', daughter of the Mughal Emperor Awrangzeb, may be rendered thus:

"My heart is glad whenever lover-wise I dwell upon thy beauties and thy grace! But how can I content my hungry eyes, That ask continually to see thy face?"

3752 There was not much in the way of worldly goods or satisfaction that the Prophet could give them: see 33:28 above. But he was kind, just, and true--the best of men to his family, and they all clung to him.

3753 Our human hearts, however good on the whole, may yet, in their motives, have possibly some baser admixture. The feminine hearts are not more immune in this respect than the masculine. But everything is known and understood by Allah, Who will in His Mercy make allowances for our human weaknesses. His title of "Most Forgiving" *(Halim)* also gives His devoted worshippers the cue: why should we not also forbear with the faults and weaknesses of our neighbours and fellow-creatures?

52. It is not lawful for thee (to marry more) women(3754) after this, nor to change them for (other) wives, even though their beauty attract thee, except any thy right hand should possess (as handmaidens): and Allah doth watch over all things.

3754 This was revealed in A.H. 7. After that the Prophet did not marry again, except the handmaiden, Mary the Copt, who was sent as a present by the Christian Muqawqas of Egypt . She became the mother of Ibrahim, who died in his infancy.

53. O ye who believe! Enter not the Prophet´s houses,- until leave is given you,-(3755) for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation: but when ye are invited, enter; and when ye have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet: he is ashamed to dismiss you, but Allah is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth. And when ye ask (his ladies)(3756) for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen: that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs. Nor is it right for you(3757) that ye should annoy(3758) Allah's Messenger, or that ye should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly such a thing is in Allah.s sight an enormity.

3755 The rules of refined social ethics are as necessary to teach today as it was with the rude Arabs whom the Prophet had to teach in his day. Those mentioned in this verse may be briefly recapitulated thus: (1) Enter not a friend's house without permission; (2) if invited to dine, don't go too early; you are asked to dine, not to wait for the preparation of the food; (3) be there at the time appointed, so that you enter when you are expected and invited; (4) after the meal, don't get familiar with your host, especially if there is a great distance between him and you; (5) don't waste time in tittle-tattle, causing inconvenience and perhaps annoyance to your host; (6) understand what is proper behaviour for you, he may be too polite to ask you to depart. All this has a spiritual as well as a social bearing: respect and delicate consideration for others are among the highest virtues.

3756 The actual manner of showing respect to ladies may be different in different circumstances. But it is an essential principle of good society to show the greatest deference to them. To the "Mothers of the Believers" this respect was due in an exceptional degree.

3757 Considering his position, the Prophet deserved to be respected before all other men and nothing should be done to cause him the least harm and annoyance. This applied not only during his lifetime, but it applies now, because his teaching and personality are alive to us. It was not fitting that his widows, both for their own position and for the position of the Prophet, should be married by other men after him. And this mark of respect was duly observed in history.

3758 "Annoy": *Adha* may equally mean to vex, to cause hurt or injury, to insult, to ill-treat by slander or unseemly conduct, or hurt the feelings of (someone). The Prophet came with a divine mission to teach and reclaim the world, and he is entitled to the respect of all, even of those who do not consciously acknowledge his mission, for his mission works constantly like the forces of nature. In a minor degree the "Mothers of the Believers" are also entitled to respect.

54. Whether ye reveal anything(3759) or conceal it, verily Allah has full knowledge of all things.

3759 Respect or opposition may be shown overtly or in devious hidden ways. All good and evil are open before Allah, and He will take due account of everything.

55. There is no blame (on these ladies if they appear) before their fathers(3760) or their sons, their brothers, or their brother´s sons, or their sisters´ sons, or their women, or the (slaves) whom their right hands possess. And, (ladies), fear Allah. for Allah is Witness to all things.

3760 This refers back to the *Hijab* (screen) portion of verse 53 above. The list of those before whom the Prophet's wives could appear informally without a screen is their fathers, sons, brothers, brothers 1 or sisters' sons, serving women, and household slaves or servants. Commentators include uncles (paternal and maternal) under the heading of "fathers". *Their women* is held to mean all women who belonged to the Muslim community: other women were in the position of strangers, whom they received not so intimately, but with the formality of a screen as in the case of men. Compare with this list and the wording here the list and the wording in 24:31, which applies to all Muslim women. In the list here, husbands and husbands' relatives are not necessary to be mentioned, as we are speaking of a single household, that of the central figure in Islam, nor men-servants nor children, as there were none. In the wording note that for Muslim women generally, no screen or *Hijab* (Pardah) is mentioned, but only a veil to cover the bosom, and modesty in dress. The screen was a special feature of honour for the Prophet's household, introduced about five or six years before his death.

56. Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet:(3761) O ye that believe! Send ye blessings on him, and salute him with all respect.

3761 Allah and His angels honour and bless the Prophet as the greatest of men. We are asked to honour and bless him all the more because he took upon himself to suffer the sorrow and afflictions of this life in order to guide us to Allah's Mercy and the highest inner Life.

57. Those who annoy(3762) Allah and His Messenger - Allah has cursed them in this World and in the Hereafter, and has prepared for them a humiliating Punishment.

3762 *Cf.* n. 3758 above.

58. And those who annoy believing men and women undeservedly, bear (on themselves)(3763) a calumny and a glaring sin.

3763 *Cf.* 4:112. In that passage we were told that anyone who was himself guilty but accused an innocent man of his guilt, was obviously placing himself in double jeopardy; first, for his own original guilt, and secondly for the guilt of a false accusation. Here we take two classes of men instead of two individuals. The men and women of faith (if they deserve the name) and doing all they can to serve Allah and humanity. If they are insulted, hurt, or annoyed by those whose sins they denounce, the latter suffer the penalties of a double guilt, *viz.,* their sins to start with, and the insults or injuries they offer to those who correct them. Instead of resenting the preaching of Truth, they should welcome it and profit by it.

59. O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women,(3764) that they should cast their outer garments over(3765) their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known(3766) (as such) and not molested. And Allah is Oft- Forgiving,(3767) Most Merciful.

3764 This is for all Muslim women, those of the Prophet's household, as well as the others. They were asked to cover themselves with outer garments when walking around. (R).

3765 *J ilbab,* plural *Jalabib:* an outer garment: a long gown covering the whole body, or a cloak covering the neck and bosom.

3766 The object was not to restrict the liberty of women but to protect them from harm and molestation. In the East and the West a distinctive public dress of some sort or another has always been a badge of honour or distinction, both among men and women. This can be traced back to the earliest civilisations. Assyrian Law in its palmiest days (say, 7th century B.C.), enjoined the veiling of married women and forbade the veiling of slaves and women of ill fame: see *Cambridge Ancient History,* III, 107.

3767 That is, if a Muslim woman sincerely tries to observe this rule, but owing to human weakness falls short of the ideal, then "Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (*Cf.* 24:30-31). (R).

60. Truly, if the Hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is a disease, and those who stir up sedition in the City,(3768) desist not, We shall certainly stir thee up against them: Then will they not be able to stay in it as thy neighbours for any length of time:

3768 It was necessary to put down all kinds of unseemly conduct in the Prophet's City. And here is the warning in the plainest terms. And the warning had its effect. The "Hypocrites" were men who pretended to be in Islam but whose manners and morals were anti-Islamic. Those "with diseased hearts" may have been the ones that molested innocent women. "Those who stirred up sedition" put false rumours in circulation to excite the crowd. Alas! we must ask ourselves the question: "Are these conditions present among us today?"

61. They shall have a curse(3769) on them: whenever they are found, they shall be seized and slain (without mercy).

3769 They will be deprived of the blessing and guidance of Allah. They sought to cause disorder in Allah's world—moral as well as material, but they will themselves be destroyed. Those who become outlaws, rebels against the Law, will themselves be destroyed by the Law. Capital punishment is the only adequate punishment for treason and crimes of sustained concerted violence—for the protection of the hearths and homes of innocent citizens and the honour of their women.

62. (Such was) the practice (approved) of Allah among those(3770) who lived aforetime: No change wilt thou find in the practice (approved) of Allah.

3770 The Jewish Law was much more severe: see notes 3703 and 3704 to 33:26. That severity is mitigated in Islam. But it is a universal principle that any element which deliberately refuses to obey law and aggressively tries to subvert all order in society, secretly and openly, must be effectively suppressed, for the preservation of the life and health of the general community.

63. Men ask thee concerning the Hour: Say, "The knowledge(3771) thereof is with Allah (alone)": and what will make thee understand?- perchance the Hour is nigh!

3771 *Cf.* 7:187 and n. 1159, where the idea is further explained. The knowledge of the Final Hour is with Allah alone. The fact of its coming is certain: the exact time when it will come has not been revealed. If it were, it would disturb our thoughts and life. "Heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth." But at any given moment it cannot be far distant. In theological language, each individual's death is a Final Hour, a *Qiyamah Sughra* (Lesser Day of Judgement). In that sense it is not the same for all individuals, and is certainly always near, "In the midst of life we are in death", as the Anglican Prayer-Book says in its Burial Service.

64. Verily Allah has cursed the Unbelievers and prepared for them a Blazing Fire,-

65. To dwell therein for ever: no protector will they find, nor helper.

66. The Day that their faces will be turned upside down(3772) in the Fire, they will say: "Woe to us! Would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger."

3772 The face is the expression of their Personality, their Self; and turning upside down is a sign of degradation and ignominy. When the Retribution comes, the evil ones will be humiliated, and they will wish that they had followed right guidance when they had the chance. They will then fall to accusing their leaders who misled them. But they forget their own personal responsibility.

67. And they would say: "Our Lord! We obeyed our chiefs and our great ones, and they misled us as to the (right) Path.

68. "Our Lord! Give them double Penalty(3773) and curse them with a very great Curse!"

3773 *Cf.* 25:69 and n. 3129, and 11:20 and n. 1515. The double Penalty invoked will be because (1) they went wrong themselves and (2) they misled others.

69. O ye who believe! Be ye not like those who vexed and insulted Moses,(3774) but Allah cleared him of the (calumnies) they had uttered: and he was honourable in Allah.s sight.

3774 The people of Moses often vexed him and rebelled against him and against Allah's Law. Here the reference seems to be to Num. 12:1-15. It is there said that Moses's own sister Miriam and his brother Aaron spoke against Moses because Moses had married an Ethiopian woman. Allah cleared Moses of the charge of having done anything wrong: "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house." Miriam was afflicted with leprosy for seven days as a punishment, after which she was forgiven, as also was Aaron. This is the Old Testament story. The Prophet was also attacked because of his marriage with Zaynab bintjahsh, but not by his own circle; his motives were of the highest and were completely vindicated as we have seen above.

70. O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and (always) say a word directed to the Right:(3775)

3775 We must not only speak the truth as far as we know it, but we must always try to hit the right point; *i.e.,* we must not speak unseasonably, and when we do speak, we must not beat about the bush, but go straight to that which is right, in deed as well as in word. Then Allah will make our conduct right and cure any defects that there may be in our knowledge and character. With our endeavour directed straight to the goal, we shall be forgiven our errors, shortcomings, faults, and sins of the past.

71. That He may make your conduct whole and sound and forgive you your sins: He that obeys Allah and His Messenger, has already attained the highest Achievement.(3776)

3776 This is salvation, the attainment of our real spiritual desire or ambition, as we are on the highway to nearness to Allah.

72. We did indeed offer the Trust(3777) to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains;(3778) but they refused(3779) to undertake it,(3780) being afraid thereof: but man undertook it;-(3781) He was indeed unjust(3782) and foolish;-

3777 The Trust is something given to a person, over which he has a power of disposition: he is expected to use it as directed or expected, but he has the power to use it otherwise. There is no trust if the trustee has no power, and the trust implies that the giver of the trust believes and expects that the trustee would use it according to the wish of the creator of the trust, and not otherwise.

3778 What is the meaning of the offer of the Trust to the Heavens, the Earth, and the Mountains? *Cf.* 59:21, where the hypothetical sending down of the Qur'an to the Mountains is mentioned, and it is mentioned that such Parables are put forth in order to aid men to reflection. We may therefore take the Mountains, the Earth, and the Heavens as symbolical. The mountains stand for firmness and stability: they have been created for this quality, and they are always true to that quality. An earthquake or a volcano has to do with movements within the earth's crust: it has nothing to do with the Mountain's will. In fact it has no free will of any kind: there is no question of any Trust here. If we take the Earth as a whole, as a part of the solar system or a compendium of the terrestrial Nature we see around us, it obeys the fixed laws of Allah, and there is no Will or Trust. If we take the Heavens either as celestial space, or as symbolical of the Angels, they absolutely obey Allah's Will and law: they have no will of their own.

3779 The Heavens, the Earth, and the Mountains, *i.e.,* other creatures of Allah, besides man, refused to undertake a Trust or a responsibility, and may be imagined as happy without a choice of good or evil being given through their will. In saying that they refused, we imply a will, but we limit it by the statement that they did not undertake to be given a choice between good and evil. They preferred to submit their will entirely to Allah's Will, which is All-Wise and Perfect, and which would give them far more happiness than a faculty of choice, with their imperfect knowledge. Man was too audacious and ignorant to realise this, and the result has been that man as a race has been disrupted: the evil ones have betrayed the trust and brought Punishment on themselves, though the good have been able to rise far above other Creation, to be among the *muqarrabin,* the nearest ones to Allah: 56:11 and 56:88. What can be higher than this for any creature?

It follows incidentally from this that the Heavens and the Earth were created before man was created, and this is in accordance with what we know of the physical world in science: man came on the scene at a comparatively late stage.

3780 *Hamala:* to undertake, bear, carry (the Trust or responsibility), to be equal to it. This is the ordinary meaning, and the majority of Commentators construe so. But some understand it to mean "to carry away, run away with, to embezzle (the thing entrusted); hence to be false to the Trust, to betray the Trust." In that case the sense of verses 72-73 would be: "Allah offered the Trust to other creatures, but they refused, lest they should betray it, being afraid from that point of view: but man was less fair to himself: in his ignorance he accepted and betrayed the trust, with the result that some of his race became Hypocrites and Unbelievers and were punished, though others were faithful to the Trust and received Allah's Mercy." The resulting conclusion is the same under both interpretations.

3781 See 2:30 -34 and notes. Allah intended a very high destiny for man, and placed him in his uncorrupted state even above the angels, but in his corruption he made himself even lower than the beasts. What was it that made man so high and noble? The differentiating quality which Allah gave man was that Allah breathed something of His own spirit into man (32:9; 15:29 and n. 1968; and other passages). This meant that man was given a limited choice of good and evil, and that he was made capable of Forbearance, Love, and Mercy. And in himself man summed up Allah's great world: man is in himself a microcosm.

3782 That man should undertake the God-like attributes (in however small a degree) of Will, Forbearance, Love, and Mercy, brought him nearer to Allah than was possible for any other creature of Allah. This was part of Allah's Will and Plan, but little did man realise then what a tremendous task he was undertaking or question himself whether he would be equal to it. *Zalum* (translated "unjust") *and Jahul* (ignorant) are both in the Arabic intensive form; as much as to say, 'man *signally* failed to measure his own powers or his own knowledge'. But Allah's Grace came to his assistance. Where man did his best, he won through by Allah's Grace, even though man's Best was but a poor Good.

How did man generically undertake this great Responsibility, which made him Vicegerent of Allah (2:30)? Here comes in the mystic doctrine of a Covenant, expressed or implied, between Allah and Humanity. See 7:172-73 and notes 1146-1148, also 5:1 and n. 682. A Covenant *(Mithaq)* necessarily implies Trust, and its breach necessarily implies Punishment.

73. (With the result) that Allah has to punish(3783) the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Unbelievers, men and women, and Allah turns in Mercy to the Believers,(3784) men and women: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

3783 Man's generic Covenant, which flowed from his exercising the option given him, choosing Will, Forbearance, Love, and Mercy, made it necessary that breach of it should carry its own punishment. Breach of it is here classed under two heads: those who betray their Trust act either as Hypocrites or as Unbelievers. Hypocrites are those who profess Faith but bring not forth the fruits of Faith. Unbelievers are those who openly defy Faith, and from whom therefore no fruits of Faith are to be expected.

3784 Those who remain firm to their Faith and their Covenant (see notes 3781-3782) will receive the aid of Allah's Grace; their faults and weaknesses will be cured: and they will be made worthy of their exalted Destiny. For Allah is Oft-Returning and Most Merciful.

So ends a Surah which deals with the greatest complications and misunderstandings in our throbbing life here below, and points upwards to the Great Achievement, the highest Salvation

34. Saba' (Sheba)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Praise be to Allah,(3785) to Whom belong all things in the heavens and on earth: to Him be Praise in the Hereafter: and He is Full of Wisdom, acquainted with all things.

3785 All Creation declares His Praises, *i.e.,* manifests His Mercy and Power, Goodness and Truth—all the sublime attributes summed up in His Most Beautiful Names (7:180 and 17:110 and notes). For man, to contemplate these is in itself a Revelation. This sentiment opens five Surah of the Qur'an evenly distributed, *viz.,* 1, 6, 18, 34, and 35. Here the point most emphasised is that His wisdom and mercy comprehend all things, extended in space or in time—here and everywhere, now and evermore. (R).

2. He knows all that goes(3786) into the earth, and all that comes out thereof; all that comes down from the sky(3787) and all that ascends thereto and He is the Most Merciful, the Oft-Forgiving.

3786 An ignorant man may think that water absorbed in the soil or seed sown beneath the sod is lost, but it replenishes numerous rills and streams, and feeds and sustains numerous roots and forms of life, and throws up all kinds of vegetable life. So with things that come out of the earth who can count the myriad forms of herbs and trees that grow and perish, and yet sustain a continuous life for ages and ages? Yet these are symbolical of other things or entities beyond time or space, and beyond physical form. We see the birth and death of the animal part of man: when he is buried beneath the soil, the ignorant man thinks there is an end of him. But what countless stages still lie before him for his inner and spiritual life? And so with the Platonic Forms of Things: Goodness, Virtue, Mercy, and the various functions of the soul. They are never lost, but go up to Allah.

3787 The vapours that rise from the earth and ascend to the sky descend again as rain and snow and as symbols of Allah's Mercy. So are the prayers of the devout and the call of those in agony for help and light, answered by the descent of mercy and guidance, help and light from the Throne of Majesty. The imagery indicated in the last note can be worked out to moral and spiritual forces, and they all centre in Allah. Do not forget that, just as there is the element of Mercy, so there is an element of Justice and Punishment—in the physical forces as well as in the moral and spiritual forces, all centering in Allah.

3. The Unbelievers say,(3788) "Never to us will come the Hour": Say, "Nay! but most surely, by my Lord,(3789) it will come upon you;- by Him Who knows the unseen,- from Whom is not hidden the least little atom in the heavens or on earth: Nor is there anything less than that, or greater, but is in the Record Perspicuous:(3790)

3788 The last two verses prepared us to realise the positions of Unbelievers in Allah's great Universe. They are the discord in the universal harmony of Prayer and Praise. Their existence is due to the grant of a limited free will, the Trust which the Unbelievers have betrayed (see 33:72 and notes). But they must and will be eliminated: see verse 5 below. For there is nothing more certain in the world, physical, moral and spiritual, than that every cause, great or small, must have its corresponding consequences.

3789 The strongest emphasis and the most perfect assurance of certainty are indicated by reference to the authority of Allah Himself, the Ruler of the Day of Judgement

3790 In the symbolical language of our own human experiences, a record is more enduring than memory: in fact (if properly preserved) it is perpetual. If, further, it is expressed in clear language, without any obscurity, it can always be read with perfect precision and without any doubt whatever. Apply these qualities, free from human defects, to Allah's laws and decrees. They are unerring and enduring. Everything, great or small, will receive due recognition—a Reward for Good and Punishment for Evil *(Cf.* n. 3843).

4. That He may reward those who believe and work deeds of righteousness: for such is Forgiveness and a Sustenance(3791) Most Generous."

3791 *Sustenance.* Spiritual in things spiritual, and physical in things physical. It implies not only the satisfaction of desire, but the provision of means for sustaining the ground won and for winning more ground in the inarch of progress.

5. But those who strive against Our Signs, to frustrate(3792) them,- for such will be a Penalty,- a Punishment most humiliating.

3792 *Cf.* 22:51 . Allah's Plan cannot be frustrated. It is those who work against it, who will be eliminated and destroyed.

6. And those to whom(3793) knowledge has come see that the (Revelation) sent down to thee from thy Lord - that is the Truth, and that it guides to the Path of the Exalted (in might), Worthy of all praise.

3793 Against the doubts and vain imaginings of the Ignorant is the certainty of knowledge of the Enlightened: that Allah reveals Himself, and that His Revelation is true and leads to the Path of true Guidance. That Path is the Path of Allah, Who, in His infinite love and Mercy, is Worthy of all Praise.

It is possible to connect this with the "Record Perspicuous" in verse 3 above: "it is perspicuous., for the Enlightened do see. . ."

7. The Unbelievers say (in ridicule): "Shall we point out to you a man(3794) that will tell you, when ye are all scattered to pieces in disintegration, that ye shall (then be raised) in a New Creation?

3794 This is a taunt against the Prophet, and it is applicable to all who preach the doctrine of a Future Life. How is it possible, say the Unbelievers, that when a man's body is reduced to dust and scattered about, the man should rise again and become a new Creation? They add that such a preacher is inventing a deliberate falsehood or is demented.

8. "Has he invented a falsehood against Allah, or has a spirit (seized) him?"-(3795) Nay, it is those who believe not in the Hereafter, that are in (real) Penalty, and in farthest error.

3795 The answer is: the Future Life is the truest of all Truths; so far is the man who teaches it from being demented, that it is those who deny it, that lack knowledge and are in real jeopardy for their souls; for they persecute Truth and must not only suffer defeat, but go farther and farther from Realities and thus suffer the worst hallucinations about the spiritual world.

9. See they not what is before them and behind them, of the sky and the earth?(3796) If We wished, We could cause the earth to swallow(3797) them up, or cause a piece of the sky to fall upon them.(3798) Verily in this is a Sign for every devotee that turns to Allah (in repentance).

3796 The men who walk in spiritual darkness and laugh at a Hereafter have but to observe the Power of Allah in the nature around them. He Who created the heavens and the earth and sustains them can surely make a new Creation! And the cosmic Laws which are so just and inevitable should surely give them an idea of the inexorable Justice that must redress all balance.

3797 *Cf.* 16:45 , and n. 2071. Who are these puny creatures—sceptics that question the might and majesty of Allah?

3798 *Cf.* 26:187. this was actually a challenge hurled at Shu'ayb and a shower of ashes and cinders came from above and overwhelmed the challengers!

10. We bestowed Grace aforetime on David from Ourselves:(3799) "O ye Mountains! Sing ye back the Praises of Allah with him! and ye birds (also)! And We made the iron soft for him;-(3800)

3799 *Cf.* 21:79-80, and notes 2733-34. David had the gift of song and sacred music, and this is shown in his Psalms. All nature —hills and birds—sing and echo back the Praise of Allah.

3800 Iron or steel is hard stuff: but in the hands of a craftsman it becomes soft and pliable, and with it can be made instruments for the defence of righteousness. These, in the literal sense, are coats of mail, and defensive armour, and the manufacture of them is traditionally attributed to David. (R).

11. (Commanding), "Make thou coast of mail, balancing well(3801) the rings of chain armour, and work ye righteousness;(3802) for be sure I see (clearly) all that ye do."

3801 Coats of chain armour have to be made with cunning art, if the chains are to fit into each other and the whole garment is to be worn in comfort in fierce warfare.

3802 Note the transition from the singular, "make them coats of mail", to the plural "and work ye righteousness". The first is addressed to David, who was the artificer of defensive armour: and the second is addressed to him and his whole people. He made the armour, but it was to be worn not only by him but all the warriors. But he and his people were to be careful to see that they did not deviate from the paths of righteousness. Fighting is a dangerous weapon and may well degenerate (as it so often does) into mere violence. They were to see that this should not happen, and they were told that Allah was watching over them all with personal solicitude implied in the singular pronoun "I".

12. And to Solomon (We made) the Wind (obedient):(3803) Its early morning (stride) was a month´s (journey), and its evening (stride) was a month´s (journey); and We made a Font(3804) of molten brass to flow for him; and there were Jinns that worked in front(3805) of him, by the leave of his Lord, and if any of them turned aside from our command, We made him taste of the Penalty of the Blazing Fire.

3803 *Cf.* 21:81-82, n. 2736, and 38:36-38. See also 27:38-39. The winds are swift and can cover in a short morning's or evening's flight the distance it takes a whole month to cover on foot or by bullock cart. In our own day, with air speeds of 400 miles and more per hour, this seems a moderate statement.

3804 In the Old Testament, 2 Chronicles, Chapters 3, and 4, are described the various costly materials with which Solomon's Temple was built, and it was furnished with vessels, candlesticks, lamps, censers, etc. "Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance: for the weight of the brass could not be found out" (2 Chronicles, 4:18). "Also he made a molten sea often cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about" (2 Chronicles, 4:2). The receptacle or "sea" or Font was made of molten brass: presumably it contained flowing water for washing with.

3805 See 27:17, and n. 3257. (R).

13. They worked for him as he desired, (making) Arches,(3806) images, basons as large as reservoirs, and (cooking) cauldrons fixed (in their places): "Work ye,(3807) sons of David, with thanks! but few of My servants are grateful!"

3806 *Mihrab* (Plural *Maharib),* translated "arch", may be applied to any fine, elevated, spacious architectural structure. As the reference here is to the Temple of Solomon , the word "arches" is I think most appropriate. "Arches" would be structure Ornaments in the Temple . Images would be like the images of oxen and Cherubim mentioned in 2 Chronicles, 4:3 and 3:14; the Basins 2 Chronicles 4:22 were perhaps huge dishes round which many men could sit together and eat, according to ancient Eastern custom, while the cooking Cauldrons or Pots (2 Chronicles, 4:16), were fixed in one place, being so large in capacity that they could not be moved about. (R).

3807 The building of the Temple was a great event in Israelite history. The motto here given is "Work!": for only that would justify the maintenance of the Kingdom of David , which reached its zenith under Solomon. Without work, both literally, and figuratively for "righteous deeds", all that glory and power would be out of place, and it fell away in a few generations, with the decline of the moral spirit which was at its back.

14. Then, when We decreed (Solomon´s) death, nothing showed them his death except a little(3808) worm of the earth, which kept (slowly) gnawing away at his staff: so when he fell down, the Jinns saw(3809) plainly that if they had known the unseen, they would not have tarried in the humiliating Penalty (of their Task).

3808 This allegory illustrates three points: (1) however great and glorious human power and grandeur may be, it is only for a time, and it may fade away even before people know of its decline; (2) the most remarkable events may be brought to light, not by a flourish of trumpets, but by a humble individual, unknown and unseen, who works imperceptibly and undermines even so strong a thing as a staff, on which a great man may lean; (3) work done by men merely on the basis of brute strength or fear, as in the case of the Jinns, will not endure. This is brought up in strong contrast against the Power and Majesty of Allah, which will endure, which cannot be sapped, and which can only be fully appreciated by a training of the will and heart. In the same way, in David's story above, his mighty strength as a warrior, (see 2:251), and his skill in making armour are only to be valued when used, as it was used, in the service of Allah, in righteous works (34:11).

3809 The Jinns looked upon their work as a Penalty, and so it became to them. The people who worked at the Temple of Solomon as the People of David worked and gloried in their work as a thanksgiving to Allah, and their work became sanctified. The Jinns knew nothing of hidden secrets; they only saw the obvious, and had not even the significance of the little worm that slowly gnawed away Solomon's staff.

15. There was, for Saba',(3810) aforetime, a Sign in their home-land - two Gardens to the right and to the left. "Eat of the Sustenance (provided) by your Lord, and be grateful to Him: a territory fair and happy, and a Lord Oft-Forgiving!(3811)

3810 This is the same city and territory in Yemen as is mentioned in 27:22: see note there as to its location. There the period was the time of Solomon and Queen Bilqls. Here it is some centuries later. It was still a happy and prosperous country, amply irrigated from the Ma'arib dam. Its road or perhaps its canals, were skirted by gardens on both sides, right and left: at any given point you always saw two gardens. It produced fruit, spices, and frankincense, and got the name of Araby the Blest for that part of the country.

3811 The land was fair to look upon: the people happy and prosperous: and they enjoyed the blessings of Allah, Who is Gracious and does not punish small human faults or weaknesses.

16. But they turned away (from Allah., and We sent against them the Flood(3812) (released) from the Dams,(3813) and We converted their two garden (rows) into "gardens" producing bitter fruit, and tamarisks, and some few (stunted) Lote-trees.(3814)

3812 Into that happy Garden of Eden in Arabia Felix (Araby the Blest) came the insidious snake of Unfaith and Wrongdoing. Perhaps the people became arrogant of their prosperity, or of their science, or of their skill in irrigation engineering, in respect of the wonderful works of the Dam which their ancestors had constructed. Perhaps they got broken up into rich and poor, privileged and unprivileged, high-caste and low-caste, disregarding the gifts and closing the opportunities given by Allah to all His creatures. Perhaps they broke the laws of the very Nature which fed and sustained them. The Nemesis came. It may have come suddenly, or it may have come slowly. The pent-up waters of the eastern side of the Yemen highlands were collected in a high lake confined by the Dam of Ma'arib. A mighty flood came: the dam burst: and it has never been repaired since. This was a spectacular crisis: it may have been preceded and followed by slow desiccation of the country.

3813 *"Arim" (*= Dams or Embankments) may have been a proper noun, or may simply mean the great earthworks lined with stone, which formed the Ma'arib dam, of which traces still exist. The French traveller TJ. Arnaud saw the town and ruins of the Dam of Ma'arib in 1843, and described its gigantic works and its inscriptions: See *Journal Asiatique* for January 1874: the account is in French. For a secondary account in English, see W.B. Harris, *Journey Through Yemen,* Edinburgh, 1893. The dam as measured by Arnaud was two miles long and 120 ft. high. The date of its destruction was somewhere about 120 A.C., though some authorities put it much later.

3814 The flourishing " Garden of Arabia " was converted into a waste. The luscious fruit trees became wild, or gave place to wild plants with bitter fruit. The

feathery leaved tamarisk, which is only good for twigs and wattle-work, replaced the fragrant plants and flowers. Wild and stunted kinds of thorny bushes, like the wild Lote tree, which were good for neither fruit nor shade, grew in place of the pomegranates, the date palms, and the grapevines. The lote tree belongs to the family Rhamnaceac, *Zizyphus Spina Christi.* of which (it is supposed) Christ's crown of thorns was made, allied to the *Zizyphus Jujuba,* or *bertree* of India . Wild, it is shrubby, thorny and useless. In cultivation it bears good fruit, and some shade, and can be thornless, thus becoming a symbol of heavenly bliss: 56:28.

17. That was the Requital We gave them because they ungratefully rejected Faith:(3815) and never do We give (such) requital except to such as are ungrateful rejecters.

3815 *Kafur:* intensive form: "those who deliberately and continuously reject Allah and are ungrateful for His Mercies, as shown by their constant wrongdoing.

18. Between them and the Cities(3816) on which We had poured our blessings, We had placed Cities in prominent positions, and between them We had appointed stages of journey in due proportion: "Travel therein, secure, by night and by day."

3816 An instance is now given of the sort of covetousness on the part of the people of Saba , which ruined their prosperity and trade and cut their own throats. The old Frankincense route was the great Highway *(imam mubin* 15:79; *sabil muqim,* 15:76) between Arabia and Syria . Through Syria it connected with the great and flourishing Kingdoms of the Euphrates and Tigris valleys on the one hand and Egypt on the other, and with the great Roman Empire round the Mediterranean . At the other end, through the Yemen Coast , the road connected, by sea transport, with India , Malaya, and China . The Yemen-Syria road was much frequented, and Mada'in Salih was one of the stations on that route, and afterwards on the Pilgrim route: see Appendix VII to S. 26. Syria was the land on which Allah "had poured his blessings", being a rich fertile country, where Abraham had lived: it includes the Holy Land of Palestine. The route was studded in the days of its prosperity with many stations (cities) close to each other, on which merchants could travel with ease and safety, "by night and by day". The close proximity of stations prevented the inroads of highwaymen.

19. But they said:(3817) "Our Lord! Place longer distances between our journey- stages":(3818) but they wronged themselves (therein). At length We made them as a tale (that is told),(3819) and We dispersed them all in scattered fragments. Verily in this are Signs for every (soul that is) patiently constant and grateful.

3817 *Said,* in this and other places in the Qur'an, "language" is used for thought or deed. The Commentators call it the "Language of actual facts" *(zaban hal)* as opposed to the "language of words" *(zaban qal).*

3818 The covetous Saba ' people, in order to get more profit from travellers' supplies by concentrating them on a few stations which they could monopolise, tended to choke off traffic and ruin the big trade. Selfishness often runs counter to true self-interest. It is a historical fact that the great Yemen-Syria route in Arabia declined with the decline of Yemen . There were no doubt physical causes, but supreme above all were the moral causes, the grasping nature of the people, and their departure from the highest standards of righteousness.

3819 The people of Saba were given every chance. They had prosperity, skill, trade and commerce, and a healthy and beautiful country. They also had, apparently, great virtues, and as long as they remained true to their virtues, *i.e.,* to the Law of Allah, they remained happy and contented. But when they became covetous and selfish, and became jealous of other people's prosperity instead of rejoicing in it, they fell from grace and declined. It may be that the climate changed, the rainfall became scantier, perhaps on account of the cutting down of hill forests: trade routes changed, on account of the people falling off in the virtues that make men popular: behind all the physical causes was the root-cause, that they began to worship mammon, self, greed, or materialism. They fell into the snare of Satan. They gradually passed out of history, and became only a name in a story. Moral: it is only Allah's Mercy that can give true happiness or prosperity, and happiness or prosperity is only a snare unless used for the highest service of Allah and man.

20. And on them did Satan prove true his idea,(3820) and they followed him, all but a party that believed.

3820 *Cf.* 17:62, Satan out of arrogance had said, when he asked for respite from the Most High: "I will bring (Adam's) descendants under my sway, all but a few." This was now proved true on the Saba people. He had no power to force them. It was their own will that went wrong and put them into his power.

21. But he had no authority over them,- except that We might test the man who(3821) believes in the Hereafter from him who is in doubt concerning it: and thy Lord doth watch over all things.

3821 *Might test:* the word in the original is *might know.* It is not that Allah does not know all. Why does He want to test? It is in order to help us subjectively, to train our will, to put us definitely the question, "Will you obey Allah or other than Allah?" *(Cf.* n. 467 to 3:154 and also 47:31).

22. Say: "Call upon other (gods)(3822) whom ye fancy, besides Allah. They have no power,- not the weight of an atom,- in the heavens or on earth:(3823) No (sort of) share have they therein, nor is any of them a helper to Allah.

3822 Other objects of worship, such as Self, or Money, or Power, or things we imagine will bring us luck or prosperity, though they can do nothing of the kind.

3823 The False gods have no power whatever either in heaven or on earth, either in influencing our spiritual life or our ordinary worldly life. To suppose that they have some share, or that they can give some help to Allah, even though Allah is Supreme, is both false and blasphemous. Allah is One and Supreme, without sharer, helper, or equal.

23. "No intercession can avail in His Presence, except for those(3824) for whom He has granted permission. So far (is this the case) that, when terror is removed from their hearts(3825) (at the Day of Judgment, then) will they say, ´what is it that your Lord commanded?´(3826) they will say, ´That which is true and just; and He is the Most High Most Great´."

3824 *Cf.* 20:109, n. 2634, where I have explained the two possible modes of interpretation. Each soul is individually and personally responsible. And if there is any intercession, it can only be by Allah's gracious permission. For the Day of Judgement will be a terrible Day, or Day of Wrath *(Dies irae)* according to the Latin hymn, when the purest souls will be stupefied at the manifestation of Allah's Power. See next note.

3825 "Their hearts": the pronoun "their" refers to the angels nearest to Allah. On the Day of Judgement there will be such an irresistible manifestation of Power that even they will be silent for a while, and will scarcely realise what is happening. They will question each other, and only thus will they regain their bearings. Or "their" may refer to those who seek intercession.

3826 In their mutual questionings they will realise that Allah's Judgement, as always, is right and just. Does this mean that no sort of intercession is required?

24. Say: "Who gives you(3827) sustenance, from the heavens and the earth?" Say: "It is Allah. and certain it is that either we or ye(3828) are on right guidance or in manifest error!"

3827 There are six propositions introduced here with the word "Say", at verses 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 30. They clearly explain the doctrine of Unity (verse 22), the Mercy of Allah (verse 23), man's Personal Responsibility (verse 25), the Final Justice of Allah (verse 26), Allah's Power and Wisdom (verse 27), and the Inevitability of the Judgement, by which the true values will be restored (verse 30).

3828 Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, are incompatible, one with another. In this matter we can make no compromise. It is true that in men there may be various degrees of good or evil mixed together, and we have to tolerate men as our fellow-creatures, with all their faults and shortcomings. But this does not mean that we can worship Allah and Mammon together. Wrong is the negation of Right as light is of darkness. Though there may be apparently varying depths of darkness, this is only due to the imperfection of our vision: it is varying strengths of light as perceived by our relative powers of sight. So we may perceive the Light of Allah in varying degrees according to our spiritual vision. But in simple questions of Right and Wrong, we are faced by the Categorical Imperative.

25. Say: "Ye shall not be questioned as to our sins,(3829) nor shall we be questioned as to what ye do."

3829 Therefore do not prosecute us, or bring personal animus to bear on us. We must do our duty in declaring the universal Message, which is for you as much as for us.

26. Say: "Our Lord will gather us together and will in the end decide the matter between us (and you) in truth and justice:(3830) and He is the one to decide, the One Who knows all."

3830 Human controversies are vain and inconclusive. If you put your trust in Allah and we put our trust in Allah, we belong to one Brotherhood, and we shall see the perfect Truth finally when the Time comes.

27. Say: "Show me those whom ye have joined with Him as partners: by no means (can ye). Nay, He is Allah,(3831) the Exalted in Power, the Wise."

3831 Wisdom and Power only belong to Allah. If you put your trust in other things, they will fail you, because they do not exist—as objects of worship. All else that you set your hearts upon will and must fail you, because they cannot in any wise be brought in to rivalry with Allah.

28. We have not sent thee but as a universal (Messenger)(3832) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin), but most men understand not.

3832 Allah's Revelation, through the Prophet, was not meant for one faith or tribe, one race or set of people. It was meant for all mankind, to whom, if they turn to Allah, it is a Message of the glad tidings of His Mercy, and if they do not turn to Him, it is a warning against sin and the inevitable Punishment. That the Punishment does not come immediately (as far as they perceive) is no reason for doubting it. It has been declared in clear and unequivocal terms, and nothing can be more certain. Why delay? Why ask carping questions? Why not profit by the Message, turn to Allah in repentance, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness?

29. They say: "When will this promise (come to pass) if ye are telling the truth?"

30. Say: "The appointment to you is for a Day, which ye cannot put back for an hour(3833) nor put forward."

3833 When that Day actually arrives, your period of probation will have passed. It will be too late. Now is the time for action and spiritual profit.

31. The Unbelievers say: "We shall neither believe in this scripture nor in (any) that (came) before it."(3834) Couldst thou but see when the wrong-doers will be made to stand before their Lord, throwing back the word (of blame)(3835) on one another! Those who had been despised will say to the arrogant ones:(3836) "Had it not been for you, we should certainly have been believers!"

3834 To the Pagans all scriptures are taboo, whether it be the Qur'an or any Revelation that came before it. The people of the Book despised the Pagans, but in their arrogant assumption of superiority, prevented them, by their example, from accepting the latest and most universal Scripture when it came in the form of the Qur'an. This relative position of men who fancy themselves on their knowledge, and men whom they despise but exploit and mislead, always exists on this earth. I have mentioned the people of the Book and the Pagan Arabs merely by way of illustration.

3835 One disbelief is as bad as another. There is little to choose between them. But when the final account will be taken, there will be mutual recriminations between the one and the other.

3836 The Pagans will naturally say to the people of the Book; 'You misled us; you had previous Revelations, and you should have known how Allah sent His Messengers; had it not been for your bad example, we should have received Allah's Revelation and become Believers." Or the humble followers will say this to their leaders, or those less gifted will say to those by whom they were misled and exploited. The dichotomy is between such as pretentiously held their heads high in the world and such as they profited by but held in contempt.

32. The arrogant ones will say to those who had been despised: "Was it we who kept you back from Guidance after it reached you? Nay, rather, it was ye who transgressed.(3837)

3837 In the mutual reproaches between the misleaders and the misled ones, there will be a grain of truth on both sides, and yet both were guilty in not realising their own personal responsibility.

33. Those who had been despised will say to the arrogant ones: "Nay! it was a plot (of yours) by day and by night:(3838) Behold! Ye (constantly) ordered us to be ungrateful to Allah and to attribute equals to Him!"(3839) They will declare (their) repentance(3840) when they see the Penalty: We shall put yokes on the necks of the Unbelievers: It would only be a requital for their (ill) Deeds.

3838 The more intelligent ones who exploit the weaker ones are constantly plotting night and day to keep the latter ignorant and under their thumb. They show them the ways of Evil, because by that means they are more in their power.

3839 If all men worshipped the true God, and none but Him, they could not on the one hand be trampled upon, and on the other hand they could not be unjust. It is in the worship of false ideals or false gods that alluring structures of fraud and injustice are built up.

3840 *Cf.* 10:54 , and n. 1445. All these mutual recriminations would be swallowed up in the general realisation of the Truth by both sides in the Hereafter. They would be prepared openly to declare their repentance, but it would be too late. The yoke of slavery to Evil will be on their necks. Allah's justice put it there, but what else could it do? Their own sins will cry out against them and hold them under their yokes.

34. Never did We send a warner to a population, but the wealthy ones among them(3841) said: "We believe not in the (Message) with which ye have been sent."

3841 Whenever the Message of Allah comes, the vested interests range themselves against it. Worldly power has made them arrogant: worldly pleasures have deadened their sensibility to Truth. They reject the Message because it attacks their false position.

35. They said: "We have more in wealth and in sons,(3842) and we cannot be punished."

3842 Their arrogance is openly based on their worldly power and position, their family influence, and the strength of their man-power. Turn back again to the contrast drawn between the arrogant ones and those whom they despised, in verses 31-33.

36. Say: "Verily my Lord enlarges and restricts the Provision(3843) to whom He pleases, but most men understand not."

3843 *Provision* (or Sustenance): good things of all kinds in this life, material goods as well as power, opportunities, influence, mental gifts, etc. These do not necessarily all go to the good, nor is their denial to be interpreted to mean that it is a withdrawal of Allah's favour. Very often the contrary is the case. Their distribution is in accordance with the Universal Plan and Purpose, which is All-Wise and All-Good, but ignorant people cannot understand this (*Cf.* n. 3791).

37. It is not your wealth nor your sons, that will bring you nearer to Us(3844) in degree: but only those who believe and work righteousness - these are the ones for whom there is a multiplied Reward(3845) for their deeds, while secure they (reside) in the dwellings on high!(3846)

3844 The true test of progress in spiritual life is to be measured by other things than material wealth and influence. What we have to ask ourselves is: are we the least bit nearer to Allah?.

3845 *Cf.* 30:39. All worldly goods are but a shadow that will pass away. Its intrinsic and eternal value is small. But those who work righteousness in Faith are on the true path of self-development. The rewards they will get will be intimately more than their merits entitle them to. For they will partake of the boundless Bounties of Allah.

3846 Their happiness will not only be great in quantity ("multiplied"), but it will be of a specially sublime quality ("dwellings on high"), and it will endure without any chance of its loss or diminution ("secure they reside").

38. Those who strive against Our Signs, to frustrate them,(3847) will be given over into Punishment.

3847 *Cf.* 34:5, where the argument was urged that human efforts to defeat Allah's Plan will only bring humiliation to those who indulge in them. Here the argument is rounded off by the statement that such efforts, besides their failures, will land them in an abyss of punishment contrasted with the "dwellings on high" of the blessed ones.

39. Say: "Verily my Lord enlarges and restricts the Sustenance(3848) to such of his servants as He pleases: and nothing do ye spend in the least (in His cause) but He replaces it: for He is(3849) the Best of those who grant Sustenance.

3848 *Cf.* 34:36, above, and n. 3843.

3849 Even in the seeming inequality of distribution of the good things of life, Allah has a wise and merciful purpose: for nothing arises by chance. He is the best to give us, now and evermore, just those things which subserve our real needs and advance our inner development.

40. One Day He will gather them all together, and say to the angels,(3850) "Was it you that these men used to worship?"

3850 Here we have the case of the worship of angels or supposed Powers of Allah, or supposed beneficent spirits that men turn to instead of worshipping the true God. In fact these are mere names to the false worshippers. It is not the Good that they worship but the Evil, which leads them astray.

41. They will say, "Glory to Thee! our (tie) is with Thee - as Protector(3851) - not with them. Nay, but they worshipped the Jinns:(3852) most of them believed in them."

3851 *Wali* in Arabic may mean Friend either in the sense of Protector and Benefactor or in the sense of the Beloved. The tie of benevolence, confidence, and friendship is implied, either active or passive. The angels first proclaim their dependence on Allah and their need of His protection, and then disclaim any idea of their having protected or encouraged the false worshippers to worship beings other than Allah. They go further, and suggest that when men pretended to worship angels, they worshipped, not angels, but Jinns. See next note.

3852 *Jinns:* see 6:100 and n. 929. The false worshippers pretended to worship the bright and radiant angels of good, but in reality worshipped the dark and hidden forces of evil-the devils hidden within themselves or in the life around them. They trusted and believed in such forces of evil, although such forces of evil had really no power.

42. So on that Day no power shall they have over each other, for profit or harm: and We shall say to the wrong-doers, "Taste ye the Penalty(3853) of the Fire,- the which ye were wont to deny!"

3853 The supposed "rivals" of Allah—the false things whereon men set their hopes and fears-will have no power whatever when true values are restored; and the Fire-the Penalty-which they doubted or derided, will become the dominating thing in their experience *(Cf.* 35:13-14).

43. When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them, they say, "This is only a man who wishes to hinder you from the (worship)(3854) which your fathers practised." And they say, "This is only a falsehood invented!" and the Unbelievers say of the Truth when it comes to them, "This is nothing but evident magic!"

3854 Apart from the worship of Evil in the guise of the Powers of Light, there is another form of false worship, which depends on ancestral tradition. "Why" it is said "should we not do as our fathers did?" They reject a new prophet of Truth simply because his teaching does not agree with the ways of their ancestors. The answer to this is given in verse 44 below. But meanwhile the rejectors' objection to new Truth is stated in three forms: (1) our ancestors knew nothing of this: (2) The story of inspiration is false; it is merely an invention; we do not believe in inspiration: (3) when in some particular points, the new Truth does work wonders in men's hearts, they account for it by saying it is magic. The third objection is merely traditional. What is magic? If it is merely deception by the fact that the Messenger who comes with new spiritual Truth is acknowledged to be truthful in other relations of life: why should he be false where his preaching brings him no gain but much sorrow and persecution? For the ancestral objection see next note.

44. But We had not given them Books which they could study, nor sent messengers(3855) to them before thee as Warners.

3855 The ancestors (as in the case of the Arabs of the Times of Ignorance) had received no revelation of the clear kind which a messenger and a Book bring them. This is a reason for welcoming, not for rejecting, new Truth.

45. And their predecessors rejected (the Truth); these have not received a tenth of what We had granted(3856) to those: yet when they rejected My messengers, how (terrible) was My rejection (of them)!

3856 Passing to Peoples before the immediate ancestors, the People of the Book, or the People of Saba' and 'Ad and Thamud, had received favours and gifts, power and wealth, ten times more than were enjoyed by the Pagan Quraysh. Yet when they turned away from them, and what terrible consequences descended on them when they lost Allah's Grace! This should make everyone humble, not least the posterity of Muhammad the Messenger if they forsake Allah's Truths! For they have received a higher Teaching!

46. Say: "I do admonish you on one point: that ye do stand up before Allah,- (It may be) in pairs,(3857) or (it may be) singly,- and reflect (within yourselves): your Companion is not(3858) possessed: he is no less than a warner to you, in face of a terrible Penalty."

3857 A crowd mentality is not the best for the perception of the final spiritual truths. For these, it is necessary that each soul should commune within itself with earnest sincerity as before Allah: if it requires a Teacher, let it seek out one, or it may be that it wants the strengthening of the inner convictions that dawn on it, by the support of a sympathiser or friend. But careful and heartfelt reflection is necessary to appraise the higher Truths.

3858 Note that in verses 46, 47, 48, 49 and 50, arguments are suggested to the Prophet, by which he can convince any right-thinking man of his sincerity and truth. Here the argument is that he is not possessed or out of his mind. If he is different from ordinary men, it is because he had to give a warning of a terrible spiritual danger to the men whom he loves but who will not understand his Message.

47. Say: "No reward do I ask of you: it is (all) in your interest: my reward(3859) is only due from Allah. And He is witness to all things."

3859 *Cf.* 10:72. The second argument is that he has nothing to gain from them. His message is for their own good. He is willing to suffer persecution and insult, because he has to fulfil his mission from Allah.

48. Say: "Verily my Lord doth cast the (mantle of) Truth (over His servants),-(3860) He that has full knowledge of (all) that is hidden."

3860 Allah's Truth is so vast that no man in this life can compass the whole of it. But Allah in His mercy selects His servants on whom it is cast like a mantle. They see enough to be able to teach their fellow men. It is through that mantle -that mission received from Allah-that a messenger can speak with authority to men. He cannot explain the exact mystery of inspiration, but he *knows* it is from Allah, and this is his third argument.

49. Say: "The Truth has arrived, and Falsehood neither creates(3861) anything new, nor restores anything."

3861 The fourth argument is that the Truth is final: it does not come and go: it creates new situations and new developments, and if by chance it *seems* to be defeated for a time, it comes back and restores the true balance-unlike Falsehood, which by its very nature is doomed to perish: 17:81. The Prophet's credentials are known by the test of Time. This was already becoming apparent to discerning eyes when this Surah was revealed in Makkah, but it became clear to the whole world with the story of Islam's progress in Madinah.

50. Say: "If I am astray, I only stray to the loss of my own soul: but if I receive guidance, it is(3862)

because of the inspiration of my Lord to me: it is He Who hears all things, and is (ever) near."

3862 If it could possibly be supposed that the Prophet was a self-deceived visionary, it would affect him only, and could not fail to appear in his personality. But in fact he was steady in his constancy and Faith, and he not only went from strength to strength, but won the enduring and wholehearted love and devotion of his nearest and dearest and of those who most came into contact with him. How was this possible, unless he had the Truth and the inspiration of Allah behind him? This is the fifth and last argument in this passage.

51. If thou couldst but see when they will quake with terror; but then there will be no escape(3863) (for them), and they will be seized from a position (quite) near.

3863 After the arguments for the reality and triumph of Truth, we are asked to contemplate the position of the opposers of Truth when Truth is established. They will be struck with terror: For Truth is all-compelling. They will wish they could get away from that position, but that would be impossible. They will not be able to move far; they will be held fast to the consequences of their own earlier conduct. They will be caught quite close to the point of their departure from Truth.

52. And they will say, "We do believe (now) in the (Truth)"; but how(3864) could they receive (Faith) from a position (so far off,-

3864 They will now profess their faith in Truth, but of what value will such a profession be? Faith is a belief in things unseen; now everything is plain and open before them. The position in which they could have received Faith is left far off behind them, when Truth was struggling and asked for help or asylum, and they cruelly, arrogantly, insultingly repudiated Truth.

53. Seeing that they did reject Faith (entirely) before, and that they (continually) cast(3865) (slanders) on the unseen from a position far off?

3865 **Not only did they reject the Truth of the Unseen (the true Reality), but they spread all sorts of false and malicious insinuations at the preachers of Truth, calling them dishonest men, liars, hypocrites, and so on. They did it like a coward taking up a sneaking position far from the fight and speeding arrows at a distant target.**

54. And between them and their desires, is placed a barrier,(3866) as was done in the past with their partisans:(3867) for they were indeed in suspicious (disquieting) doubt.(3868)

3866 What they desire is to suppress Truth and to indulge in the satisfaction of their own evil, selfish motives. They will be baulked in both, and that itself will be their anguish and punishment. That had always been the law in the eternal struggle between Right and Wrong. *Cf.* Shakespeare, (Trolius and Cressida. i. 3. 116). "Right and wrong. Between whose endless jar justice resides." All partisans of such cliques have always suffered the same fate.

3867 Note that verses 51 -54 are a powerful description of the conflict between right and wrong, and may be understood in many meanings. (1) The description applies to the position in the final Hereafter, as compared with the position in this life. (2) It applies to the position of triumphant Islam in Madinah and later, as compared with the position of persecuted Islam in its early days in Makkah. (3) It applies to the reversal of the position of right and wrong at various phases of the world's history, or of (4) individual history.

3868 *Cf.* 14:9, and see n. 1884.



35. Fatir (The Originator or Creation)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Praise be to Allah,(3869) Who created (out of nothing)(3870) the heavens and the earth, Who made the angels,(3871) messengers with wings,- two, or three, or four (pairs): He adds to Creation(3872) as He pleases: for Allah has power over all things.

3869 See n. 3785 to 34:1. When we praise Allah, it means that we understand and bring to mind that His glory and power are exercised for the good of His Creation, and this is the subject matter of the Surah.

3870 As man's knowledge of the processes of nature advances, he sees how complex is the evolution of matter itself, leaving out the question of Life and the spiritual forces, which are beyond the ken of experimental science. But this knowledge itself becomes a sort of "veil of Light"; man becomes so conscious of the proximate causes, that he is apt, in his pride, to forget the primal Cause, the Cause of Causes, the ultimate Hand of Allah in Creation. And then, Creation is such a complex process; see some of the ideas involved explained by different words in n. 120 to 2:117. The *word fatara* here used means the creation of primeval matter, to which further creative processes have to be added by the Hand of Allah, or Allah "adds to His Creation as He pleases", not only in quantity, but in qualities, function, relations, and variations in infinite ways.

3871 The grosser ideas which men have of angels must be dismissed from our minds. They are beings expressive of qualities or powers, which may be typified by "wings". We need not suppose that angelic "wings" have muscles and feathers, like the wings of birds. If they had, how could there be three, or any odd number? We may suppose "two, three, or four" to refer to pairs of wings. But we must not suppose "two, three, or four" to express precise numbers, for in sacred literature we find mention of angels with six hundred wings. And we can imagine angels with just one pair of wings. They are Messengers or Instruments of Allah's Will, and may have a few or numerous Errands entrusted to them. *Cf.* the description of the Spirit of Inspiration in 26:193, and of the spirits or angels for executing the Commands of Allah in 79:1-5.

3872 See n. 3870 above, where the complexities of the creative processes is referred to. Allah's creation did not stop at some past time: it continues, for He has all power, and His mercies are ever poured forth without stint.

2. What Allah out of his Mercy doth bestow on mankind there is none can withhold: what He doth withhold, there is none can grant,(3873) apart from Him: and He is the Exalted in Power, full of Wisdom.

3873 As Allah is the Creator and Sustainer of all beings and things, so does His Kindness extend to all Creatures. No one can intercept Allah's mercies and gifts. Whatever is His Will and Plan and Purpose He can and does carry out. And if from any creature He withholds any particular gifts, there is no other person or power that can give those gifts. But such withholding is not arbitrary. He is full of wisdom and goodness, and every act of His, whether He withholds or gives, is full of kindness and mercy to His creatures.

3. O men! Call to mind the grace of Allah unto you! is there a creator, other(3874) than Allah, to give you sustenance from heaven or earth? There is no god but He: how then are ye deluded away from the Truth?

3874 As the primal Cause of all things is Allah, an appeal is made to man to turn to Allah instead of running after false fancies. Allah is not only the source, but the centre of all life and activity, and all affairs return to Him. The world is sustained, and human life is sustained, by Allah's grace and providence. "Sustenance" is to be taken, in Qur'anic language, for all that helps to maintain and develop every aspect of life, physical and spiritual. It would be the height of folly, then, for man to ignore Allah's gracious Message, as explained in His Revelation.

4. And if they reject thee, so were messengers rejected(3875) before thee: to Allah back for decision all affairs.

3875 And yet there will be human perversity which will reject the True and accept the False. The Prophet of Allah is not discouraged by this, as everything ultimately returns to Allah, and we must trust His Wisdom in His Universal Plan. (R).

5. O men! Certainly the promise of Allah(3876) is true. Let not then this present life deceive you,(3877) nor let the Chief Deceiver deceive you about Allah.

3876 In verse 3 above the appeal was on the basis of the Past and the Present; now the appeal is on the basis of the Future. Allah's grace has promised us the Garden of Bliss ; His justice has promised us the Fire of Suffering. Both promises are certain to be fulfilled. On which side shall we range ourselves?

3877 *Cf.* 31:33 and n. 3624. The deception of Evil takes two forms. (1) The seductive temptations of this world may deceive us into forgetting the Hereafter. (2) The Arch-Enemy himself may so blind our spiritual vision that we may say with him, "Evil! be thou my good!" We maybe misled by easy stages. Are we on our guard?

6. Verily Satan is an enemy to you: so treat him(3878) as an enemy. He only invites his adherents, that they may become Companions of the Blazing Fire.

3878 Evil is our enemy and should be treated as such. It is really foreign to our nature, however much it may disguise itself to deceive us as our friend, or a part of our nature. Personifying the Spirit of Evil, we may say that he wants us to share in his own damnation. Shall we allow ourselves to fall into his snare?

7. For those who reject Allah,(3879) is a terrible Penalty: but for those who believe and work righteous deeds, is Forgiveness, and a magnificent Reward.

3879 To reject Allah is to reject all the good which He has implanted in our nature. Are we going to be false to the true Pattern according to which He created us, and suffer the consequences? Or are we going to be true to that Pattern and achieve the high and noble Destiny intended for us?

8. Is he, then, to whom the evil of his conduct is made alluring, so that he looks upon it(3880) as good, (equal to one who is rightly guided)? For Allah leaves to stray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills. So let not thy soul go out in (vainly) sighing after them: for Allah knows well all that they do!

3880 *Cf.* n. 3877 above. When a stage is reached at which a man accepts Evil as his Good, his case is hopeless. Can such a man profit by preaching or guidance? He has himself deliberately rejected all guidance. Such a man is best left to stray. Perhaps, even in the paths in which he is straying, some sudden flash of light may come to him! That may be as Allah wills in His holy and wise Purpose and Plan. But the man of God is not to worry or feel disheartened by such men's attitude. He must go on tilling the soil drat is open to him. For Allah's Plan may work in all sorts of unexpected ways, as in the allegory in the next verse. (R).

9. It is Allah Who sends forth the Winds, so that they raise up the Clouds,(3881) and We drive them to a land that is dead, and revive the earth therewith after its death: even so (will be) the Resurrection!

3881 The allegory here is double. {1) Dry, unpromising soil may seem, to all intents and purposes, dead; there is no source of water near; moisture is sucked up by the sun's heat in a far-off ocean, and clouds are formed; winds arise; it seems as if the wind "bloweth as it listeth", but it is really Allah's Providence that drives it to the dead land; the rain falls, and behold! mere is life and motion and beauty everywhere! So in the spiritual world. Allah's Revelation is His Mercy and His Rain; there may be the individual resurrection *(Nushur)* or unfolding of a. soul. (2) So again, may be the general Resurrection *(Nushur),* the unfolding of a new World in the Hereafter, out of an old World that is folded up and dead *(Takwir,* S. 81).

10. If any do seek for glory and power,-(3882) to Allah belong all glory and power. To Him mount up (all) Words of Purity: It is He Who exalts each Deed of Righteousness. Those that lay Plots(3883) of Evil,- for them is a Penalty terrible; and the plotting of such will be void (of result).

3882 Good and Evil are to be distinguished sharply. No good is ever lost: it goes up to the Throne of Allah. The humblest Good, in word or deed, is exalted to high rank. If man seeks for mere glory and power, there is no such thing apart from Allah. But seeking Allah, we attain to the highest glory and power.

3883 It is the nature of Evil to work underground, to hide from the Light, to plot against Righteousness: but Evil inevitably carries its own punishment. Its plots must fail miserably. And eventually Evil itself is to be blotted out.

11. And Allah did create(3884) you from dust; then from a sperm-drop; then(3885) He made you in pairs. And no female conceives, or lays down (her load), but with His knowledge. Nor is a man long-lived granted length of days, nor is a part cut off from his life, but is in a Decree(3886) (ordained). All this is easy to Allah.(3887)

3884 *Cf.* 18:37 and n. 2379; 22:5 and n. 2773; and 30:20 and n. 3524. Here the argument is that man's physical origin is lowly; his physical body is but dust; his life-sperm issues from a part of his body which he hides and considers as a place of shame; and the mystery of sex shows that no one individual among mankind is sufficient for himself. Glory and power and knowledge are not in him, but in Allah, from Whom alone he derives any glory, or power, or knowledge that he possesses.

3885 "Then" in this and the following clause refers, not to stages of time, but to stages in the argument. It is almost equivalent to "further", "also", and "in addition".

3886 Things that appear most secret and mysterious to man are all known and ordained by Allah. They are all subject to Allah's Laws and Decrees. The mystery of human birth (see n. 3625 to 31:34), the mystery of sex, the mystery of Life and Death and many other things, seem to man inexplicable. But they are all ordained by Allah, and their reasons are fully known to Him.

3887 Man's knowledge may be acquired laboriously and may be a burden to him. Allah's knowledge is different; it is no task or burden to Him. *Cf.* 33:19 and 30.

12. Nor are the two bodies(3888) of flowing water alike,- the one palatable, sweet, and pleasant to drink, and the other, salt and bitter. Yet from each (kind of water) do ye eat flesh fresh and tender,(3889) and ye extract ornaments(3890) to wear; and thou seest the ships therein that plough the waves, that ye may seek (thus) of the Bounty of Allah that ye may be grateful.

3888 See 25:53 and notes 3111 and 3112. The great salt Ocean with its seas and gulfs is all one; and the great masses of sweet water in rivers, lakes, ponds, and underground springs are also one; and each is connected with the other by the constant circulation going on, which sucks up vapours, carries them about in clouds or atmospheric moisture, and again brings them condensed into water or snow or hail to mingle with rivers and streams and get back into the Ocean.

3889 For this whole passage see 16:14 and notes 2034 and 2035. Both from the sea and from rivers and lakes we get fish, of which some kinds have a flesh particularly fresh and tender, and of a most delicate flavour.

3890 Such as pearls and coral from the sea, and such delicately tinted stones as the *'Aqiq* (car-nelian), the agate, the goldstone, or other varieties of quartz pebbles found in riverbeds, and considered as gems. Many such are found in the Ken river in Banda District (in India). Some river sands also yield minute quantities of gold. In large navigable rivers and big lakes like those of North America , as well as in the sea, there are highways for shipping and commerce. (R).

13. He merges Night into Day,(3891) and he merges Day into Night, and he has subjected the sun and the moon (to His Law):(3892) each one runs its course for a term appointed. Such is Allah your Lord:(3893) to Him belongs all Dominion. And those whom ye invoke besides Him have not the least power.(3894)

3891 *Cf.* 22:61. The phases of Light in nature may have other uses. But for man they mark periods of rest and activity, and-have great influence on his physical, moral, and spiritual life.

3892 *Cf.* 13:2. The sun and the moon mark phases of light, and serve man during the periods of the day and night. The sun marks the seasons, and is the source of heat and energy and physical life for the whole solar system. The sun and the moon run according to fixed laws, and they will continue to do so, not forever, but for the period appointed for their duration by Allah.

3893 Allah's might and majesty, and Allah's goodness and wisdom, having been shown by a few examples, it follows that it is folly to seek or worship any other power but Allah. It only throws off man into false paths, and takes him farther and farther away from the Truth.

3894 *Qitmir*: the thin, white skin that covers the date stone. It has neither strength nor texture, and has no value whatever. Any one relying on any power other than that of Allah relies on nothing whatever. The *Qitmir is* worse than the proverbial "broken reed", *Cf.* 4:53 and 4:124, where the word *naqir,* 'the groove in a date stone', is used similarly for a thing of no value or significance.

14. If ye invoke them, they will not listen to your call, and if(3895) they were to listen, they cannot answer your (prayer). On the Day of Judgment they will reject(3896) your "Partnership". and none, (O man!) can tell thee(3897) (the Truth) like the One Who is acquainted with all things.

3895 False or imaginary objects of worship serve no purpose whatever. They cannot hear; if they could hear, they could not grant prayers or petitions. In fact, if they are real creatures, such as angels or deified human beings, they will very rightly repudiate any such worship as brings them into competition or "partnership" with Allah. See next note.

3896 *Cf.* 10:28 and n. 1418; also 34:40-41. No false ideas or false impressions will remain when true values are restored. Why not then accept the Truth now in this life, and get on to the true path of Grace?

3897 None can tell you the Truth better than He Who is All-Wise and All-Knowing. Why not accept His Message and receive His guidance?

15. O ye men! It is ye that have need of Allah. but Allah is(3898) the One Free of all wants, worthy of all praise.

3898 What is man that Allah should care for him, instruct him, and send him special messengers to warn him of danger and harm? It is man that depends on Allah and has need of Him every moment of his life. Allah has no need of him, but He bestows His Grace on him as on all His creatures, out of His unbounded Mercy and loving kindness. If it were Allah's Will, He could blot out man for his rebellion and create an entirely new world.

16. If He so pleased, He could blot you out and bring in a New Creation.

17. Nor is that (at all) difficult for Allah.(3899)

3899 There is no limit to Allah's creative power, nor is His creative energy anything rare or unusual. This is the force of the word *'aziz* here. Allah's creative energy is exercised every moment, and it is the normal condition in the universe.

18. Nor can a bearer(3900) of burdens bear another´s burdens if one heavily laden should call another to (bear) his load. Not the least portion of it can be carried (by the other). Even though he be nearly(3901) related. Thou canst but admonish such as fear their Lord unseen(3902) and establish regular Prayer.(3903) And whoever purifies himself does so for the benefit of his own soul; and the destination (of all) is to Allah.

3900 Bearer: *waziratun:* feminine in Arabic, as referring to the soul *(nafs),* as in 6:164 and 53:38.

3901 Natural relationship may be considered as a reasonable cause or opportunity for bearing each other's burdens. For example, a mother or a father might offer to die for her or his child, and *vice versa.* But this does not apply to spiritual matters. There the responsibility is strictly personal and cannot be transferred to another. In 29:13 we are told that the misleaders "will bear other burdens along with their own": but the context shows that the "other" burdens are the burdens of deluding the others with their falsehoods. Both sins are their own, *viz.,* their original sin, and the sin of deluding the others. But the responsibility will be doubled. *(Cf.* n. 1019. n. 1515. and n. 3773).

3902 *B'il ghayb:* unseen in the adverbial sense. The man, who, though he does not see Allah, so realises Allah's Presence in himself as if he saw Him, is the man of genuine Faith, and for him Allah's Revelation comes through many channels and is always fruitful. *(Cf.* 36:11).

3903 Prayer is one of the means of purifying ourselves of lower motives in life, for in prayer we seek the Presence of Allah; but the purity which we seek is for our own souls: we confer no favour on Allah or on any Power in the spiritual world, as some imagine who make "gifts" to Allah. In any case the destination of all is to Allah.

19. The blind and the seeing are not alike;(3904)

3904 Now we are offered some contrasts between those who obey Allah's Law and are thus citizens of Allah's Kingdom and those who are rebels against Allah's Kingdom and are thus oudaws. How can they be considered alike? The godly are like those who see, as contrasted with those who are blind; and their motives and actions are like the purest and highest Light, contrasted with the depths of darkness; or, to take another metaphor, their lives are like the genial and warmth-giving heat of the sun, which benefits all who come within its influence, contrasted with the chilly shadows of gloom in which no vegetation flourishes. (R).

20. Nor are the depths of Darkness and the Light;

21. Nor are the (chilly) shade and the (genial) heat of the sun:

22. Nor are alike those(3905) that are living and those that are dead. Allah can make any that He wills to hear; but thou canst not make those to hear who are (buried) in graves.

3905 The final contrast between the Living and the Dead; those whose future has in it the promise of growth and fulfilment, and those who are inert and on the road to perish. With Allah everything is possible: He can give Life to the Dead. But the human Teacher should not expect that people who are (spiritually) dead and buried will by any chance hear his call.

23. Thou art no other than a warner.(3906)

3906 The function of a Prophet is to preach Allah's Truth, to point out the right Way, to show men the need of repentance, and to warn them against the dangers which they incur by living a life of evil. He cannot compel them to accept the Truth or listen to the Message.

24. Verily We have sent thee in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings,(3907) and as a warner: and there never was a people, without a warner having lived among them (in the past).

3907 It is Allah Who sends the Revelation. While there is warning in it for the heedless, there is good news (in Christian terms, the gospel) for those who listen and repent. The warning always came to all peoples before punishment.

25. And if they reject thee, so did their predecessors, to whom came their messengers with Clear Signs, Scriptures(3908) and the Book of Enlightenment.

3908 The three things here mentioned are also mentioned in 3:184, where I have explained the meaning in n. 490. All spiritual teaching centres round the evidences of Allah in our lives, the sublime teaching of men of God, and the rules and laws which guide holy living. (R).

26. In the end did I punish those who rejected Faith: and how (terrible)(3909) was My rejection (of them)!

3909 *Cf.* 22:44 and 34:45. The rejecters of Allah hardly realise the terrible consequences to them individually and collectively, if Allah's grace is withdrawn from them and they are left to perish in their own sins and wrongdoing.

27. Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colours.(3910) And in the mountains are tracts white and red,(3911) of various shades of colour, and black intense in hue.

3910 Everyone can see how Allah's artistry produces from rain the wonderful variety of crops and fruits-golden, green, red, yellow, and showing all the most beautiful tints we can think of. And each undergoes in nature the gradual shading off in its transformation from the raw stage to the stage of maturity.

3911 These wonderful colours and shades of colours are to be found not only in vegetation but in rocks and mineral products. There are the white veins of marble and quartz or of chalk, the red laterite, the blue basaltic rocks, the ink-black flints, and all the variety, shade, and gradation of colours. Speaking of mountains, we think of their "azure hue" from a distance, due to atmospheric effects, and these atmospheric effects lead our thoughts to the glories of clouds, sunsets, the zodiacal lights, the *aurora borealis,* and all kinds of Nature's gorgeous pageantry.

28. And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle, are they of various colours.(3912) Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge:(3913) for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.

3912 In the physical shapes of human and animal life, also, we see variations in shades and gradations of colours of all kinds. But these variations and gradations, marvellous though they be, are as nothing compared with variations and differences in the inner or spiritual world. See next note.

3913 In outer nature we can, through colours, understand and appreciate the finest shades and gradations. But in the spiritual world that variation or gradation is even more subtle and more comprehensive. Who can truly understand it? Only Allah's servants, *who know, i.e.,* who have the inner knowledge which comes through their acquaintance with the spiritual world-it is such people who truly appreciate the inner world, and it is they who know that the fear of Allah is the beginning of wisdom. For such fear is akin to appreciation and love-appreciation of all the marvellous beauties of Allah's outer and inner world ("Allah is Exalted in Might") and love because of his Grace and Kindness ("Oft-Forgiving"). But Allah's forgiveness extends to many who do not truly understand Him.

29. Those who rehearse the Book of Allah, establish regular Prayer, and spend (in Charity)(3914) out of what We have provided for them, secretly and openly, hope for a commerce(3915) that will never fail:

3914 The man of God takes Allah's Revelation ("the Book") to heart, ever seeks to get closer and closer to Allah ("regular Prayer"), and in doing so, is moved more and more to practical Charity for his fellow-creatures. He is not ashamed of his Charity ("openly"), but he does not do it to be seen of men ("secretly"): he just does what is necessary for his fellow-creatures, whether people talk about it or not.

3915 Here is a metaphor from commerce. The good man's Charity comes not merely out of superfluities, but out of "what Allah has provided" for him. He therefore recognises two things: (1) that his wealth (literal and metaphorical) is not his absolutely, but that it is given to him by Allah: and (2) that he must deny himself the use of some of it, as a merchant puts by some of his wealth to invest as capital. Only, the godly man's Commerce will never fail or fluctuate; because Allah guarantees him the return, and even adds something to the return out of His own Bounty. That is, Allah gives more than ever our merits deserve.

30. For He will pay them their meed, nay, He will give them (even) more out of His Bounty: for He is Oft-Forgiving,(3916) Most Ready to appreciate (service).(3917)

3916 No man is perfect. Everyone has his faults. But when a man tries his best in the service of Allah, his faults are blotted out, and he is treated as if he had committed no faults: "for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, and ready to appreciate service".

3917 *Cf.* 14:5, and n. 1877 for *shakur.* Allah is ready to recognise, appreciate, and reward the smallest service, without regard to the defects in that service. His gracious acceptance is compared to "gratitude" among men *(Cf.* 64:17).

31. That which We have revealed to thee of the Book is the Truth,- confirming what was (revealed) before it: for Allah is assuredly- with respect to His Servants - well acquainted and(3918) Fully Observant.

3918 All Revelation is one. The Qur'an therefore confirms the main and uncorrupted features of previous revelations. It must be so, because Allah is fully cognisant of the needs of every age and people; and therefore His Message, while it meets those needs, must in essence be the same. His Messengers did not meet each other as men; but their contact with Allah through inspiration unified their Message. And He cares for and watches over all men, and He knows fully what their needs are, even better than they know themselves.

32. Then(3919) We have given the Book for inheritance to such of Our Servants as We have chosen: but there are among them(3920) some who wrong their own souls; some who follow a middle course; and some who are, by Allah.s leave, foremost in good deeds; that is the highest Grace.

3919 The force of "then" is that of finality. The Qur'an is the last Book revealed. Or it may be here to point the contrast between "to thee" in the last verse, *i.e.,* the Prophet, in contradistinction to the People of Islam, who inherited the Book after him.

3920 The custodians of the Qur'an after the Prophet were the People of Islam. They were chosen for the Book, not in any narrow sense, but in the sense that the Book was given for their age and they were charged to obey it and preserve and propagate it, so that all mankind should receive the Message. But it does not follow that they are all true and faithful to their charge, as indeed we see too painfully around us today. Just as mankind was chosen collectively to be Vicegerents for Allah, and yet some among mankind fell into evil-even so, some in the house of Islam fail to follow the Light given to them, and thus "wrong their own souls". But some follow a middle course; in their case "the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak": their intentions are good, but they have much to learn yet of the true Muslim life and Muslim virtues. Then there is a third class: they may not indeed be perfect, but both their intentions and their conduct are sound, and they form an example to other men: they are "foremost" in every good deed. They are so, not by their own merits, but by the Grace of Allah. And they have reached the highest Achievement-the salvation, which is typified by the various metaphors that follow.

33. Gardens of Eternity will they enter: therein will they(3921) be adorned with bracelets(3922) of gold and pearls; and their garments there will be of silk.

3921 "The Garden" signifies their environment: all they see about them will give them comfort, rest, and satisfaction, and a feeling of beauty and dignity. The jewels and clothes signify their personal external state: here, again, everything will give them a sense of beauty and dignity, comfort, rest, and satisfaction. And finally, most important of all, comes their internal state, where again they will have the same sense of beauty, dignity, comfort, rest, and satisfaction: this is indicated by their words of Praise (verses 34-35).

3922 *Cf.* 18:31 and 22:23 .

34. And they will say: "Praise be to Allah, Who has removed from us (all) sorrow: for our Lord is indeed Oft-Forgiving Ready to appreciate (service):(3923)

3923 *Cf.* above, 35:30. Note how beautifully the argument is rounded off. In verse 30 they were told that "Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready to appreciate service". Now they have reached the Goal, and they have found the Promise profoundly true. All their hopes are fulfilled, and their sorrows ended.

35. "Who has, out of His Bounty, settled us in a Home that will last: no toil nor sense of weariness(3924) shall touch us therein."

3924 In case it should be thought that perpetual happiness might cloy or be dull, as would be the case in this life, it is added-as the experience of those who attain that state-that it is not so on that plane of existence. Not only is there Joy, but it remains fresh and leads to no weariness.

36. But those who reject (Allah) - for them will be the Fire of Hell:(3925) No term shall be determined for them, so they should die, nor shall its Penalty be lightened for them. Thus do We reward every ungrateful one!

3925 The "Fire" is the opposite of the "Garden". Instead of there being comfort, rest, and satisfaction in their environment, there will be pain, suffering and anguish. Instead of there being dignity there will be humiliation. And there will be no hope of its termination or abatement, not even a hope of annihilation.

37. Therein will they cry aloud (for assistance): "Our Lord! Bring us out:(3926) we shall work righteousness,(3927) not the (deeds) we used to do!" - "Did We not give you long enough life so that he that would should receive admonition? and (moreover) the

warner came to you. So taste ye(3928) (the fruits of your deeds): for the wrong-doers there is no helper."

3926 *Cf.* 23:107. Not only will their surroundings be the opposite of those in Heaven: their internal state will be one of humiliation, of piteous and fruitless appeals, of vain regrets for a past that cannot be recalled, and vain sighs for a future whose gates they have themselves barred. If they were sent back, they would relapse to their sins. *Cf.* 6:28.

3927 *Cf.* 7:53 . Their hankering after another chance, after having deliberately rejected all chances, will have no basis of reason in it.

3928 They had a long enough respite for repentance and amendment. And moreover, besides all the other sources, in nature, history, and their own hearts, by which they could learn of the Right, they had the actual teaching and warning of a messenger whose words spoke directly to them. In the circumstances the Penalty is only the fruit of their own conduct.

38. Verily Allah knows (all) the hidden things of the heavens and the earth:(3929) verily He has full knowledge of all that is in (men´s) hearts.

3929 Everything that exists is known to Allah: not only concrete things, but feelings, motives, plans, and acts of the will in the human breast.

39. He it is That has made you inheritors in the earth:(3930) if, then, any do reject (Allah), their rejection (works) against themselves: their rejection(3931) but adds to the odium for the Unbelievers in the sight of their Lord: their rejection but adds to (their own) undoing.

3930 Inheritors: *khala'if.* In two senses: (1) as Vicegerents of Allah on earth, and (2) as successors to previous people who forfeited their rights by wrongdoing. The honour and dignity of (1) and the examples of the past in (2) should have kept them straight and made them truly grateful. See also 6:165 and n. 988

3931 Their rejection and ingratitude only causes injury to themselves. They lose all honour and incur odium in the sight of Allah, and they complete their own undoing.

40. Say: "Have ye seen(3932) (these) ´Partners´ of yours whom ye call upon besides Allah. Show Me what it is they have created in the (wide) earth. Or have they a share in the heavens? Or have We given them a Book from which they (can derive) clear (evidence)?- Nay, the wrong-doers promise each other nothing but delusions.

3932 The people who enthrone in their hearts for worship anything besides Allah may well be asked a few questions. Some of such questions are indicated in the text with terse precision: (1) Have you seen these gods of yours? Do they exist? "Seeing" of course does not necessarily mean physical sight. We do not see the air, but no one doubts that it exists. And the air is a physical substance. There are forces that we know exist, but we do not see them. To us, who have Faith, Allah is a truer Reality than anything else that we know, including ourselves. Can the false worshippers say that of any of their false gods? (2) Have your gods created or originated anything on earth? You may worship power or wealth, but that is a scramble for things as between selfish men. Power or wealth does not create new men or new worlds. (3) Have they a share in the ordering of the heavens? "The heavens" may mean what you see in the physical universe of astronomy, or the still subtler inner life. Obviously your false gods fail there. (4) Or have these false gods a book or revelation from the Supreme God, with clear evidence, to give them authority to teach men? The Prophets or Messengers of Allah have such authority, and they bring evidence of the One True God. The fact is that falsehood is falsehood, however much one form of it may support another by delusions.

41. It is Allah Who sustains the heavens and the earth,(3933) lest they cease (to function): and if they should fail, there is none - not one - can sustain them thereafter: Verily He is Most Forbearing,(3934) Oft-Forgiving.

3933 The universe, as we know it, shows not only evidence of initial designs, but also the working of an intelligent Providence , which constantly sustains it. That is Allah. If you could imagine that removed, what is there to keep it going? There would only be chaos.

3934 Allah's world goes on according to the laws and decrees established by Him. There are occasional lapses and deviations on the part of His creatures. But He does not punish every petty fault. One of His merciful qualities is that of repeated forbearance and forgiveness.

42. They swore their strongest oaths by Allah that if a warner came to them, they would follow his guidance better(3935) than any (other) of the Peoples: But when a warner came to them, it has only increased their flight (from righteousness),-

3935 *Cf.* 6:157. In the first instance this referred to the Quraysh. Their attitude to the People of the Book had been one of lofty superiority or of insincere excuses. They twitted the Jews and Christians with deviating from their own lights and their own revelations; and for themselves, they said they had received no direct revelation from Allah, or they would have shown themselves the most amenable to discipline, the most ready to follow Allah's Law. This was before the Prophet received his mission from Allah. When he received it and announced it, they turned away from it. They fled from it and put a greater and greater distance between it and themselves. But this is the way of all sinners. They find much to carp at in others, and much to excuse in themselves. But when all grounds for excuse are removed, they will be found, not nearer, but farther and farther away from truth and righteousness.

43. On account of their arrogance in the land and their plotting of Evil.(3936) But the plotting of Evil will hem in only the authors thereof. Now are they but looking for the way the ancients(3937) were dealt with? But no change wilt thou find in Allah's way (of dealing):(3938) no turning off wilt thou find in Allah's way (of dealing).

3936 Two causes are mentioned why the Truth is refused acceptance. (1) Unregenerate man is arrogant, and Truth and Righteousness expose all his pretences. (2) He hopes, by underhanded plots, to undermine Truth and destroy it; but he is caught in his own snares, while Truth marches forward triumphant.

3937 In all history, men who followed evil were dealt with in three stages by Allah: (1) He was forbearing and merciful, and gave them respite; (2) He sent them admonition through his messengers, or His Signs, or His revelation; (3) He dealt out justice and punishment. At any given moment, those given to iniquity may well be asked: "Are you going to wait through all these stages or are you going at once to repent, obtain forgiveness, and walk in the ways of righteousness?"

3938 Allah's Laws are fixed, and His ways of dealing with those who follow iniquity are the same in all ages. Our human will may falter or turn away from its course, but Allah's Will ever follows its course and cannot be turned away by any cause whatever.

44. Do they not travel through the earth, and see(3939) what was the End of those before them,- though they were superior to them in strength? Nor is Allah to be frustrated by anything whatever in the heavens or on earth: for He is All-Knowing. All-Powerful.

3939 *Cf.* 30:9 and 40:21. If no other argument will convince men who follow evil, let them travel through space or time, and learn from the experience of others. Evil always came to an evil end. Let not any one individual or generation think that it could escape by some special trick or power. Far wiser and more powerful men were personally brought to account for their iniquities.

45. If Allah were to punish(3940) men according to what they deserve. He would not leave on the back of the (earth) a single(3941) living creature: but He gives them respite for a stated Term: when their Term expires, verily Allah has in His sight(3942) all His Servants.

3940 *Cf.* 16:61. There would be no salvation for any of us if we went merely on our deserts. It is Allah's mercy that saves us and helps us to a better and better life until we attain the goal of our existence.

3941 *A single living creature.* This may refer to man, the living crawling creature, with so many possibilities and yet so many weaknesses. But it may mean all creatures literally, as the life of this planet more or less centres round the life of man. He has been given dominion on this earth, and in his state of purity he is Allah's vicegerent.

3942 *Has in His sight all creatures: i.e.,* to deal with, according to His Laws of Forbearance, Mercy and Justice: see n. 3937 above. The respite does not mean that any one escapes His vigilant eye. All will be dealt with according to their deeds, with justice tempered with mercy.



36. Ya Sin

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Ya Sin.(3943)

3943 Some Commentators take *Ya* to be the vocative article, and *Sin* to be the abbreviation of *Insan, Sin* being the only "Firm Letter" in the word. In that case it would be an address to man. "O man!" But "man" in this connection is understood to mean the Leader of man, the noblest of mankind, Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah. For this Surah deals mainly with the Prophet and his Message. But no dogmatic assertion can be made about the Abbreviated Letters, for which see Appendix I, following S. 2. *Ya Sin is* usually treated as a title of the Prophet.

2. By the Qur´an,(3944) full of Wisdom,-

3944 The best credentials of the Prophet are: (I) the revelation which he brought("the Qur'an"), and the heroic unselfish life which he led ("on a Straight Way "). The appeal is therefore made on the testimony of these two facts.

3. Thou art indeed one of the messengers,

4. On a Straight Way.

5. It is a Revelation(3945) sent down by (Him), the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

3945 The Revelation again is characterised by two attributes which we find most helpful in contemplating about Allah. It has force and power: for Allah is Exalted in Might and able to enforce His Will. And it brings a Message of hope and mercy; for Allah is Most Merciful. By its characteristics we know that the Qur'an is from Allah. (R).

6. In order that thou mayest admonish a people, whose fathers had received(3946) no admonition, and who therefore remain heedless (of the Signs of Allah..

3946 Quraysh had received no Prophet before, and therefore one of themselves was made the vehicle for the universal Message to the whole world. See C. 12-15.

7. The Word is proved true(3947) against the greater part of them: for they do not believe.

3947 *Cf.* 7:30 , and n. 1012; also 17:16, and n. 2193. If people deliberately and obstinately refuse "to believe", *i.e.,* to receive guidance and admonition, the result must be that Allah's grace and mercy are withdrawn from them. Their own perversity inevitably blocks up all channels for their correction.

8. We have put yokes(3948) round their necks right up to their chins, so that their heads are forced up (and they cannot see).

3948 Man's misdeeds inevitably call forth the operation of Allah's Law, and therefore the result is in Qur'anic language attributed to Allah. The result of man's willful disobedience is now described in a series of metaphors. (1) Refusal of Allah's Light means less and less freedom of action for man: the yoke of sin is fastened round man's neck, and it gets more and more tightened, right up to the chin. (2) The head is forced up and kept in a stiff position, so that the mind becomes befogged. Moral obliquity taints the intellect. According to the Sanskrit proverb, "When destruction comes near, understanding is turned upside down." According to the Latin proverb, "Whom God wishes to destroy, He first makes demented." In other words, iniquity not only is folly, but leads deeper and deeper into folly, narrowness of vision, and blindness to the finer things of life. (3) This state of deprivation of Grace leads to such a decline in spiritual vitality that the victim can neither progress nor turn back, as explained in the next verse.

9. And We have put a bar in front of them(3949) and a bar behind them, and further, We have covered them up; so that they cannot see.

3949 Their retreat is cut off and their progress is impossible. Further the Light that should come from above is cut off, so that they become totally devoid of any hope, and the last gleam of any spiritual understanding is extinguished in them.

10. The same is it to them(3950) whether thou admonish them or thou do not admonish them: they will not believe.

3950 When the stage just described is reached, revelation or spiritual teaching ceases to have any value for them. Why then preach? The answer is given in the verses following.

11. Thou canst but admonish(3951) such a one as follows the Message and fears the (Lord) Most Gracious, unseen:(3952) give such a one, therefore,(3953) good tidings, of Forgiveness and a Reward most generous.

3951 *Cf.* 35:18. As far as those are concerned, who have obstinately delivered themselves to evil, the preaching of Allah's Message has no appeal, because their own will shuts them out. But there are others who are anxious to hear Allah's Message and receive Allah's grace. They love Allah and fear to offend against His Holy Law, and their fear is not merely superficial but deep-seated: for while they do not yet see Allah, nor do other people see them, they have the same sense of Allah's presence as if they saw Him, and their religion is not a mere pose, 'to be seen of men'.

3952 See n. 3902 to 35:18. *Unseen* is here adverbial: their reverence for Allah is unaffected by the fact that they do not see him, or that other people do not observe them, because their attitude arises out of a genuine love for Allah.

3953 To such persons the Messenger of Allah comes as a gospel or good news: because it shows them the way of forgiveness for anything wrong in their past, and it gives them the promise of a full reward in the future-generous beyond any deserts of their own, but arising out of Allah's unbounded Bounty.

12. Verily We shall give life(3954) to the dead, and We record that which they send before and that which they leave(3955) behind, and of all things have We taken account in a clear Book(3956) (of evidence).

3954 All this is possible, because there is the assurance of a Hereafter, in which Allah will be all-in-all, and evil will no longer bestride the world, as the term of its respite will have expired *(Cf.* 6:36 and 30:19).

3955 Our deeds, good and bad, go to Allah's Judgement Seat before us. They will of course be brought to our account; but our account will also be swelled by the example we left behind us and the consequences of our deeds, that will come into play or continue to operate after our earthly life had ceased. Our moral and spiritual responsibility is therefore much wider than as affects our own person.

3956 *Cf.* 2:124, and n. 124. All our account will be exactly preserved as in a book of record.

13. Set forth to them, by way of a parable, the (story of) the Companions(3957) of the City. Behold!, there came messengers to it.

3957 Many of the classical Commentators have supposed that the City referred to was Antioch . Now Antioch was one of the most important cities in North Syria in the first century of the Christian era. It was a Greek city founded by Selecus Nicator, one of the successors of Alexander, about 300 B.C. in memory of his father Antiochus. It was close to the sea, and had its seaport at Seleucia . Soon after Christ his disciples successfully preached there, and they "were called Christians first in Antioch ", Acts, 11:26 . It afterwards became the seat of a most important Bishopric of the Christian Church. In the story told here "by way of a parable", the City rejected the Message, and the City was destroyed: 36:29. Following Ibn Kathir, I reject the identification with Antioch decisively. No name, or period, or place is mentioned in the text. The significance of the story is in the lessons to be derived from it as a parable, for which see the next note. That is independent of name, time, or place.

14. When We (first) sent to them two messengers, they rejected them: But We strengthened them(3958) with a third: they said, "Truly, we have been sent on a mission to you."

3958 Allah sends His messengers or teachers of Truth by ones and twos, and where the opposition is great and He considers it necessary, he supports them with others. Their mission is divine, but they do not claim to be more than men. This is used by the unjust and the ungodly as if it were a reproach, whereas it should commend them to men, for mankind is glorified by such commission and by Allah's Self-revelation. The Message is clearly expressed in human language, but because it exposes all evil, men think it unlucky, as it checks their selfishness. It is often the poorest and most despised of mankind, from the outskirts or "farthest parts of the City", that accept the Message and are willing to work and die for it. The stiff-necked resist and accomplish their own destruction.

15. The (people) said: "Ye are only men like ourselves;(3959) and (Allah) Most Gracious sends no sort of revelation:(3960) ye do nothing but lie."

3959 *Cf.* Acts, 14:15 , where Paul and Barnabas say, in the city of Lystra near the modern Konia , "We also are men with like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities..."

3960 They not only reject the mission of the particular messengers, but they deny the possibility of Allah's sending such mission. Note how they convict themselves of inconsistency by using Allah's name "Most Gracious", even though they may mean it ironically!

16. They said: "Our Lord doth know that we have been sent on a mission to you:(3961)

3961 Just as a Messenger whose credentials are doubted can refer to the authority granted by his Principal, as the highest proof of his mission, so these messengers of Allah invoke the authority of Allah in proof of their mission. In effect they say: "The knowledge of Allah is perfect, and He knows that our mission is from Him; if you do not, it is your own misfortune." (R).

17. "And our duty is only to proclaim the clear Message."(3962)

3962 Then they proceed to explain what their mission is. It is not to force them but to convince them. It is to proclaim openly and clearly Allah's Law, which they were breaking-to denounce their sins and to show them the better path. If they were obstinate, it was their own loss. If they were rebellious against Allah, the punishment rested with Allah.

18. The (people) said: "for us, we augur an evil omen(3963) from you: if ye desist not, we will certainly stone you. And a grievous punishment indeed will be inflicted on you by us."

3963 *Ta'ir* means a bird. Like the Roman augurs, the Arabs had a superstition about deriving omens from birds. *Cf.* the English word *auspcious,* from the Latin *avis,* a bird, and *specie,* I see. From *Ta'ir* (bird) came *tatayyara,* or *ittayyara,* to draw evil omens. Because the prophets of Allah denounced evil, the evildoers thought that they brought ill-luck to them. As a matter of fact any evil that happened to them was the result of their own ill-deeds. *Cf.* 17:13 , where the Egyptians ascribed their calamities to the ill-luck brought by Moses: and 27:47, where Thamud ascribed ill-luck to the preaching of Salih.

19. They said: "Your evil omens are with yourselves:(3964) (deem ye this an evil omen). If ye are admonished? Nay, but ye are a people transgressing all bounds!"(3965)

3964 'What ye call omens arise from your own ill-deeds. Do you suppose that a man who comes to warn you and teach you the better way brings you ill-luck? Fie upon you! *(Cf.* 17:13).

3965 To call Good evil and accuse of falsehood men of truth who come unselfishly to bring the message of the beneficent Mercy of Allah, is the very height of extravagance and transgression.

20. Then there came running, from the farthest part of the City, a man,(3966) saying, "O my people! Obey the messengers:

3966 While the wealthy, influential, and fashionable men in the City were doubtful of Allah's providence and superstitiously believed in Chance and evil omens, the Truth was seen by a man in the outskirts of the City, a man held in low esteem by the arrogant. He had believed, and he wanted his City to believe. So, in Arabia , when the arrogant chiefs of Quraysh exiled the Prophet, it was men from Madman and from the outskirts, who welcomed him, believed in him, and supported his mission in everyway.

21. "Obey those who ask no reward of you (for themselves), and who have themselves received Guidance.(3967)

3967 Prophets do not seek their own advantage. They serve Allah and humanity. Their hope lies in the good pleasure of Allah, to Whose service they are devoted. *Cf.* 10:72; 12:104; etc.

22. "It would not be reasonable in me if I did not serve Him Who created me,(3968) and to Whom ye shall (all) be brought back.

3968 The argument throughout is that of intense personal conviction for the individual himself, coupled with an appeal to his people to follow that conviction and get the benefit of the spiritual satisfaction which he has himself achieved. He says in effect: 'how is it possible for me to do otherwise than to serve and adore my Maker? I shall return to Him, and so will you, and all this applies to you as much as to me.' Note how effective is the transition from the personal experience to the collective appeal.

23. "Shall I take (other) gods besides Him? If ((Allah)) Most Gracious should intend some adversity for me,(3969) of no use whatever will be their intercession for me, nor can they deliver me.

3969 The next plea is that for exclusive service to Allah. 'Suppose it were proper to worship other gods-Mammon, Self, or imaginary deities set up as idols-yet of what benefit would that be? All power is in Allah. In His universal Plan, He may think fit to give me some sorrow or punishment: would these subordinate deities be able to help me or intercede for me with Him? Not at all. What use would they be? In fact I should obviously be going as tray-wandering from the true Path.'

24. "I would indeed, if I were to do so, be in manifest Error.

25. "For me, I have faith in the Lord of you (all):(3970) listen, then, to me!"

3970 Again a transition from the assured personal conviction to the appeal to all to profit by the speaker's experience. 'I have found the fullest satisfaction for my soul in Allah. He is my God, but He is your God also. My experience can be yours also. Will you not follow my advice, and prove for yourselves that the Lord is indeed good?'

26. It was said: "Enter thou(3971) the Garden." He said: "Ah me! Would that my People knew (what I know)!-

3971 This godly and righteous man entered into the Peace of Allah, typified by the Garden of Rest and Beauty. Perhaps it is implied that he suffered martyrdom. But even then his thoughts were always with his People. He regretted their obstinacy and want of understanding, and wished even then that they might repent

and obtain salvation, but they were obdurate and suffered for their sins as we learn from verses 28-29 below.

27. "For that my Lord(3972) has granted me Forgiveness and has enrolled me among those held in honour!"

3972 This man was just a simple honest soul, but he heard and obeyed the call of the prophets and obtained his spiritual desire for himself and did his best to obtain salvation for his people. For he loved his people and respected his ancestral traditions as far as they were good, but had no hesitation in accepting the new Light when it came to him. All his past was forgiven him and he was raised to dignity and honour in the Kingdom of Heaven .

28. And We sent not down against his People, after him, any hosts from heaven, nor was it needful for Us so to do.

29. It was no more than a single mighty Blast,(3973) and behold! they were (like ashes)(3974) quenched and silent.

3973 Allah's Justice or Punishment does not necessarily come with pomp and circumstance, nor have the forces of human evil or wickedness the power to require the exertion of mighty spiritual forces to subdue them. A single mighty Blast-either the rumbling of an earthquake, or a great and violent wind-was sufficient in this case. *Cf.* 11:67 and n. 1561 (which describes the fate of Thamud); also, n. 3463 to 29:40, also 36:49,

3974 *Cf.* 21:15 . They had made a great deal of noise in their time, but they were reduced to silence, like spent ashes.

30. Ah! Alas for (My) Servants! There comes not a messenger to them but they mock him!(3975)

3975 *Cf.* 6:10 and many other passages of similar import. Ignorant men mock at Allah's prophets, or anyone who takes Religion seriously. But they do not reflect that such levity reacts on themselves. Their own lives are ruined and they cease to count. If they study history, they will see that countless generations were destroyed before them because they did not take Truth seriously and undermined the very basis of their individual and collective existence.

My *servants* is here equivalent to "men". Allah regrets the folly of men, especially as He cherishes them as His own servants.

31. See they not how many generations before them we destroyed? Not to them(3976) will they return:

3976 *Not to them will they return.* What do the pronouns *them* and *they* refer to? Commentators and translators have construed them differently, and some of them evade the question. To my mind the best construction seems to be: the generations which we have destroyed before the people addressed ('do *they* not see?') will not be restored to the people addressed; *generations (qurun)* standing for the periods of prosperity and good fortune enjoyed by the ancestors. They have ail been wiped out; they will never be restored, but all people will be brought before the Judgement Seat for giving an account of their deeds.

32. But each one of them all - will be brought before Us (for judgment).

33. A Sign for them is the earth that is dead:(3977) We do give it life, and produce grain therefrom, of which ye do eat.

3977 Lest anyone should say, 'if they are destroyed, how can they be brought before the Judgement Seat' a symbol is pointed to. The earth is to all intents and purposes dead in the winter, but Allah revives it in the spring. *Cf.* 2:164, 30:19, and many other passages to that effect.

34. And We produce therein orchard with date palms(3978) and vines, and We cause springs to gush forth therein:

3978 Date palms and vines stand as symbols for fruit trees of all kinds, these being the characteristic fruits of Arabia . Grain was mentioned in the last verse; fruit is mentioned now. All that is necessary for food and the satisfaction of the choicest palate is produced from what looks like inert soil, fertilised by rain and springs. Here is wonderful evidence of the artistry and providence of Allah.

35. That they may enjoy(3979) the fruits of this (artistry): It was not their hands(3980) that made this: will they not then give thanks?

3979 Literally, *eat (akala). Cf.* 7:19 . n. 1004 and 5:66, n. 776. The same wide meaning of profit, satisfaction, and enjoyment may be attached to the word "eat" in verse 33 above.

3980 Man may till the soil and sow the seed, but the productive forces of nature were not made by man's hands. They are the handiwork and artistry of Allah, and are evidence of Allah's providence for His creatures. See n. 3978 above.

36. Glory to Allah, Who created in pairs all things that(3981) the earth produces, as well as their own (human) kind and (other) things of which they have no knowledge.

3981 The mystery of sex runs through all creation-in man, in animal life, in vegetable life and possibly in other things of which we have no knowledge. Then there are pairs of opposite forces in nature, *e.g.,* positive and negative electricity, etc. The atom itself consists of a positively charged nucleus of protons, surrounded by negatively charged electrons. The constitution of matter itself is thus referred to pairs of opposite energies.

37. And a Sign for them is the Night: We withdraw(3982) therefrom the Day, and behold they are plunged in darkness;

3982 *Withdrawing the Day from the Night:* is a striking phrase and very apt. The Day or the Light is the positive thing. The Night or Darkness is merely negative. We cannot withdraw the negative. But if we withdraw the real thing, the positive, which filled the void, nothing is left but the void. The whole of this section deals with Signs and Symbols-things in the physical world around us, from which we can learn the deepest spiritual truths if we earnestly apply ourselves to them.

38. And the sun runs his course for a period determined(3983) for him: that is the decree of (Him), the Exalted in Might, the All-Knowing.

3983 *Mustaqarr* may mean: (1) a limit of time, a period determined, as in 6:67, or (2) a place of rest or quiescence; or (3) a dwelling place, as in 2:36.1 think the first meaning is best applicable here; but some Commentators take the second meaning. (R).

39. And the Moon,- We have measured for it mansions(3984) (to traverse) till she returns like the old (and withered) lower part of a date stalk.(3985)

3984 The lunar mansions are the 28 divisions of the Zodiac, which are supposed to make the daily course of the moon in the heavens from the time of the new moon to the time when the moon fades away in its "inter-lunar swoon", an expressive phrase coined by the poet Shelley.

3985 ' *Urjun;* a raceme of dates or of a date palm; or the base or lower part of the raceme. When it becomes old, it becomes yellow, dry, and withered, and curves up like a sickle. Hence the comparison with the sickle-like appearance of the new moon. The moon runs through all its phases, increasing and decreasing, until it disappears, and then reappears as a little thin curve.

40. It is not permitted to the Sun to catch up(3986) the Moon, nor can the Night outstrip the Day: Each (just) swims along(3987) in (its own) orbit (according to Law).

3986 Though the sun and the moon both traverse the belt of the Zodiac, and their motions are different, they never catch up each other. When the sun and the moon are on the same side and on a line with the earth there is a solar eclipse, and when on opposite sides in a line, there is a lunar eclipse, but there is no clash. Their Laws are fixed by Allah, and form the subject of study in astronomy. Similarly Night and Day follow each other, but being opposites cannot coincide, a fit emblem of the opposition of Good and Evil, Truth and Falsehood: see also n. 3982 above.

3987 *Cf.* 21:33 , and n. 2695. How beautifully the rounded courses of the planets and heavenly bodies are described, "swimming" through space, with perfecdy smooth motion! As Shakespeare expresses it, each "in his motion like an angel sings, Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims!"

41. And a Sign for them is that We bore(3988) their race (through the Flood) in the loaded Ark;

3988 Besides the beauty of the Night, with the stars and the planets "swimming" in their rounded courses according to perfect Law, suggesting both symmetry and harmony, there are other Signs touching closely the life of man himself, projected through Time, in the past history of his race and in his own personal experience. The past history of his race takes us to the story of the Flood, which is symbolical of the deliverance of man from the forces of nature. Noah's Ark is the symbol of that deliverance. But the symbol still remains as a memorial: the Ark was a "Sign to all Peoples"; 29:15. Man's own personal experience is appealed to in every ship afloat; see next note.

42. And We have created for them similar (vessels)(3989) on which they ride.

3989 The stately ships sailing through the seas, heavier than water, yet carrying man and his goods safely and smoothly across the waters, are another Sign for man. Ships are not mentioned, but (vessels) like the Ark : they would cover all kinds of seacraft, but also the modern aircraft, which "swims" through air instead of through water.

43. If it were Our Will,(3990) We could drown them: then would there be no helper (to hear their cry), nor could they be delivered,

3990 Were it not that Allah gives man the intelligence and ingenuity to construct and manage seacraft and aircraft, the natural laws of gravity would lead to the destruction of any who attempted to pass through sea or air. It is the gift (mercy) of Allah that saves him.

44. Except by way of Mercy from Us, and by way of (world) convenience (to serve them) for a time.(3991)

3991 *Cf.* 16:80. Allah has given man all these wonderful things in nature and utilities produced by the skill and intelligence which Allah has given to man. Had it not been for these gifts, man's life would have been precarious on sea or land or in the air. It is only Allah's Mercy that saves man from destruction for man's own follies, and that saving or the enjoyment of these utilities and conveniences he should not consider as eternal: they are only given for a time, in this life of probation.

45. When they are told, "Fear ye that which is(3992) before you and that which will be after you, in order that ye may receive Mercy," (they turn back).

3992 Man should consider and beware of the consequences of his past, and guard against the consequences in his future. The present is only a fleeting moment poised between the past and the future, and gone even while it is being mentioned or thought about. Man should review his whole life and prepare for the Hereafter. If he does so, Allah is Merciful: He will forgive, and give strength for a better and higher life in the future. But this kind of teaching does not suit those steeped in this ephemeral life. They are bored, and turn away from it, to their own loss.

46. Not a Sign comes to them from among the Signs(3993) of their Lord, but they turn away therefrom.

3993 The Signs of Allah are many, in His great world--in nature, in the heart of man, and in the Revelation sent through His messengers. They turn away from all of them, as a man who has ruined his eyesight turns away from the light.

47. And when they are told, "Spend ye of (the bounties)(3994) with which Allah has provided you," the Unbelievers say to those who believe: "Shall we then feed those whom, if Allah had so willed,(3995) He would have fed, (Himself)?- Ye are in nothing but manifest error."

3994 To selfish men, the good may make an appeal, and say: "Look Allah has given you wealth, or influence, or knowledge, or talent. Why not spend some of it in charity, *i.e.,* for the good of your fellow-creatures?" But the selfish only think of themselves and laugh such teaching to scorn.

3995 They are too full of themselves to have a corner in their hearts for others. "If," they say, "Allah gave them nothing, why should we?" There is arrogance in this as well as blasphemy: arrogance in thinking that they are favoured because of their merits, and blasphemy in laying the blame of other people's misfortunes on Allah. They further try to turn the tables on the Believers by pretending that the Believers are entirely on the wrong track. They forget that all men are on probation and trial: they hold their gifts on trust; those apparently less favoured, in that they have fewer of this world's goods, may be really more fortunate, because they are learning patience, self-reliance, and the true value of things ephemeral which is apt to be very much exaggerated in men's eyes.

48. Further, they say, "When will this promise (come to pass),(3996) if what ye say is true?"

3996 In addition to the arrogance and blasphemy referred to in the last note, they not only refuse Faith, but they taunt the men of Faith as if the men of Faith were dealing in falsehood: "If there is a Hereafter, tell us when it will be!" The answer is: "It will come sooner than you expect; you will yet be disputing about things of Faith and neglecting your opportunities in Life, when the Hour will sound, and you will have not time even to make your disposition in this life: you will be cut off from everyone whom you thought to be near and dear to you, or able to help you!"

49. They will not (have to) wait for aught but a single Blast: it will seize them while they are yet disputing among themselves!

50. No (chance) will they then have, by will, to dispose (of their affairs), nor to return to their own people!

51. The trumpet shall be(3997) sounded, when behold! from the sepulchres (men) will rush forth to their Lord!

3997 Traditionally, the angel who will sound the Trumpet is Israfil, but the name does not occur in the Qur'an. The Trumpet is mentioned in many places: *e.g.,* 6:73; 78:18, etc.

52. They will say: "Ah! Woe unto us! Who hath raised us up from our beds of repose?"...(3998) (A voice will say:) "This is what ((Allah)) Most Gracious had promised. And true was the word of the messengers!"

3998 The dead will rise as in a stupor, and they will be confused in the new conditions! They will gradually regain their memory and their personality. They will be reminded that Allah in His grace and mercy had already announced the Hereafter in their probationary lives, and the word of Allah's messengers, which then seemed so strange and remote, was true and was now being fulfilled!

53. It will be no more than a single Blast,(3999) when lo! they will all be brought up before Us!

3999 Time and Space, as we know them here, will be no more. The whole gathering will be as in the twinkling of an eye *(Cf.* 36:29 and 36:49 above, and 37:19).

54. Then, on that Day, not a soul will be wronged in the least,(4000) and ye shall but be repaid the meeds of your past Deeds.

4000 The Judgement will be on the highest standard of Justice and Grace. Not the least merit will go unrewarded, though the reward will be for the righteous far more than their deserts. No penalty will be extracted but that which the doer himself by his past deeds brought on himself. *Cf.* 28:84.

55. Verily the Companions(4001) of the Garden shall that Day have joy in all that they do;

4001 We now have the symbolism for the indescribable Bliss of the Hereafter, in the four verses, 55-58. Notice the subtle gradation in the description. First, in this verse, we have the nature of the *mise en scene* and the nature of the joy therein. It will be a Garden *i.e.,* everything agreeable to see and hear and feel and taste and smell; our bodily senses will have been transformed, but we can imagine something corresponding to them in our spiritual being: delightfully green lawns and meadows, trees and shrubs: the murmur of streams and the songs of birds: the delicate texture of flowers and leaves and the shapes of beauty in clouds and mist; the flavours of fruits; and the perfumes of flowers and scents. The joy in the Garden will be an active joy, without fatigue: whatever we do in it, every employment in which we engage there, will be a source of joy without alloy.

56. They and their associates(4002) will be in groves of (cool) shade, reclining on Thrones (of dignity);

4002 Secondly, the joy or happiness is figured to be, not solitary, but shared-shared by associates like those whom we imagine in spiritual Love or Marriage; in whose fair faces "some ray divine reflected shines" (Jami): whose society is enjoyed

in homes of happiness, situated in soothing shade, and furnished with thrones of dignity and peace.

57. (Every) fruit (enjoyment)(4003) will be there for them; they shall have whatever they call for;

4003 Thirdly, besides any external conditions of Bliss, the Bliss in the Hereafter has an inner quality, expressed by the word *fakihatun.* The *root fakikah* means 'to rejoice greatly', to be full of merriment'. The ordinary meaning of 'fruit' attached to *fakihah* is derived from the idea that the flavour of choice, ripe fruit, delights the heart of man *(Cf.* n. 4062). Just as *akala* (to eat) is used for 'enjoyment', (5:66, n. 776 and 13:35 , n. 1854), so *fakihah,* 'fruit', stands here for that specially choice enjoyment, which goes with a fastidious and well-cultivated taste. In other words, it suggests that highest kind of joy which depends upon the inner faculty rather than any outward circumstance. This is further emphasised by the second clause: "they shall have whatever they call for". Again using the language of this life, the musician's heaven will be full of music; the mathematician's will be full of mathematical symmetry and perfection; the artist's will be full of beauty of form, and so on.

58. "Peace!" - a Word(4004) (of salutation) from a Lord Most Merciful!

4004 Fourthly, we reach the highest grade of bliss, the mystic salutation "Peace!" from Allah Most Merciful. *Cf.* 10:10 . The wrods sums up the attainment of the final Goal. For it explains the nature of the most High-He is not only a Lord and Cherisher, but a Lord Whose supreme glory is Mercy, Peace, and Harmony!

59. "And O ye in sin!(4005) Get ye apart this Day!

4005 Notice how this finely balanced passage, after reaching the summit of sublimity in describing the state of the Blessed, in the word *Salam,* gradually takes us down to contemplate the state of the Sinners in a graduated descent. In the first place, it refers to their negative state, their state of isolation. From this Day of Judgement, they will no longer have the chance of being with the Blessed and perhaps of profiting spiritually by that proximity. The first feature of the Day of Judgement is that it is a Day of Separation-of sorting out. Each soul now finds its own true level, as the period of probation is over.

60. "Did I not enjoin(4006) on you, O ye Children of Adam, that ye should not worship Satan; for that he was to you an enemy avowed?-

4006 Secondly, there is a gentle reproach to the wrongdoers, more in sorrow than in anger. They are addressed as "children of Adam", to emphasise two facts, (1) that they have disgraced their ancestry, for Adam after his Fall repented and was forgiven, and the high Destiny of mankind has been the prize open to all his descendants, and (2) that Allah Most Merciful has throughout the ages continued to warn mankind against the snares laid by Satan, the avowed enemy of man; and that Allah's Grace was ever on the watch to help all to freedom from those snares.

61. "And that ye should(4007) worship Me, (for that) this was the Straight Way?

4007 Thirdly, besides the negative warning, a positive Way was shown to them-the Straight Way , the Ways of those who receive Allah's Grace and attain to Bliss, the Rope which would save them from shipwreck, the Shield which would save them from assault, the key to the door of proximity to Allah.

62. "But he did lead astray a great multitude of you. Did ye not, then, understand?(4008)

4008 Fourthly, it is pointed out that they were given Understanding (*'aql),* so that by their own faculties they could have judged their own best interests, and yet they betrayed or misused those faculties, and deliberately threw away their chance! And not only a few, but so many! They went gregariously to ruin in spite of the individual care which their Lord and Cherisher bestowed on them!

63. "This is the Hell(4009) of which ye were (repeatedly) warned!

4009 Fifthly, the naked fact is now placed before them-the Hell-the state of damnation, which they could so easily have avoided!

64. "Embrace ye the (Fire)(4010) this Day, for that ye (persistently) rejected (Truth)."

4010 As *they* deliberately and persistently rejected all teaching, guidance, and warnings, they are now told to experience the Fire of Punishment, for it is but the consequence of their own acts.

65. That Day shall We set a seal on their mouths.(4011) But their hands will speak to us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did.

4011 The ungodly will now be dumbfounded. They will be unable to speak or offer any defence. {The consequences of all acts, which follow according to Allah's Law, are, in Qur'anic language, attributed to Allah). But their silence will not matter. Their own hands and feet will speak against them. "Hands and feet" in this connection are symbolical of all the instruments for action which they were given in this life, including their faculties and opportunities. The same extended meaning is to be understood for "eyes" in the following verse. *Cf.* also 41:20-21, where eyes, ears, and skins are all mentioned as bearing witness against such as misused them.

66. If it had been our Will,(4012) We could surely have blotted out their eyes; then should they have run about groping for the Path, but how could they have seen?

4012 *If it had been Our Will: i.e.,* if such had been the Will and Plan of Allah. If Allah had not intended to give man his limited free will, or power of choice, the case would have been different: there would have been no moral responsibility which could have been enforced. They could have had no sight or intelligence, and they could not have been blamed for not seeing or understanding. But such is not the case.

67. And if it had been Our Will, We could have transformed them (to remain) in their places;(4013) then should they have been unable to move about, nor could they have returned (after error).

4013 If Allah's Plan had been to grant no limited freedom of choice or will to men, He could have created them quite different, or could have transformed them into stationary creatures, either in physical form as in the case of trees, or in moral or spiritual qualities, where there was no possibility either of progress or deterioration. Man would then have been unable to reach the heights of grandeur which are now open to him, or, if he goes wrong, to return through the door of repentance and mercy, and still pursue his path of ascent. But it was Allah's Plan to give man all these privileges, and man must shoulder all the responsibilities that go with them.

68. If We grant long life to any, We cause him to be reversed in nature:(4014) Will they not then understand?

4014 This connects on with the last verse. Everything is possible with Allah. If you doubt how man can be transformed from his present nature, contemplate the transformations he already undergoes in his present nature at different ages. As a child, his powers of mind and body are still undeveloped. As he grows, they grow, and certain moral qualities, such as courage, daring, the will to conquer, unfold themselves. In extreme old age these are again obscured, and a second childhood supervenes. The back of the man who walked proudly straight and erect is now bent. If the transformations take place even in his present nature and constitution, how much easier was it for Allah to cast him in an immobile mould? But Allah granted him instead the high possibilities and responsibilities referred to in the last note.

69. We have not instructed the (Prophet) in Poetry,(4015) nor is it meet for him: this is no less than a Message and a Qur´an making things clear:

4015 *Cf.* 26:224 and n. 3237. Here "Poetry" is used as connoting fairy tales, imaginary descriptions, things futile, false, or obscure, such as decadent Poetry is, whereas the Qur'an is a practical guide, true and clear.

70. That it may give admonition to any (who are) alive,(4016) and that the charge(4017) may be proved against those who reject (Truth).

4016 "Alive", both in English and Arabic, means not only "having physical life", but having all the active qualities which we associate with life. In religious language, those who are not responsive to the realities of the spiritual world are no better than those who are dead. The Message of Allah penetrates the hearts of those who are alive in the spiritual sense.

4017 *Cf.* 28:63. If people reject Truth and Faith after they have been admonished and warned, the charge against them, of willful rebellion, is proved. They cannot then plead either ignorance or inadvertence.

71. See they not that it is We Who have created for them - among the things which Our hands have fashioned - cattle, which are under(4018) their dominion?-

4018 If they are blind to other Signs of Allah, they can at least see the simple homely things of life in which they receive so many benefits from Allah's mercy. How is it that wild animals can be domesticated, and in domestication can be so useful to man? Man can use them for riding or for draught; he can use their flesh for food and drink their milk; he can use their hair or wool. *Cf.* 16:66, 80; and 23:21-22.

72. And that We have subjected them to their (use)? of them some do carry them and some they eat:

73. And they have (other) profits(4019) from them (besides), and they get (milk) to drink. Will they not then be grateful?(4020)

4019 Such as skins for leather, furs for warmth, sheep's wool or camel's hair for blankets or textiles, musk for perfume, and so on.

4020 The whole argument turns on this. 'Our teaching is for your own benefit. We confer all these blessings on you, and yet you turn away from the Giver of all, and run after your own vain imagination!'

74. Yet they take (for worship) gods other than Allah, (hoping) that they might be helped!

75. They have not the power to help them: but they will be brought up (before Our Judgment-seat) as a troop (to be condemned).(4021)

4021 There is some difference of opinion among Commentators as to the exact meaning to be attached to this clause. As I understand it, the meaning seems to be this. Man is apt to forget or turn away from the true God, the source of all the good which he enjoys, and to go after imaginary powers in the shape of gods; heroes, men, or abstract things like Science or Nature or Philosophy, or superstitious things like Magic, or Good Fortune or Ill-Fortune, or embodiments of his own selfish desires. He thinks that they might help him in this Life or in the Hereafter (if he believes in a Hereafter). But they cannot help him: on the contrary all things that are false will be brought up and condemned before Allah's Judgement Seat, and the worshippers of the Falsehoods will also be treated as a troop favouring the Falsehoods and therefore worthy of condemnation. The Falsehoods, therefore, instead of helping them, will contribute to their condemnation.

76. Let not their speech, then,(4022) grieve thee. Verily We know what they hide as well as what they disclose.

4022 If men are so foolish as to reject Allah, let not the men of Allah grieve over it. They should do their duty, and leave the rest to Allah. Allah knows all the open and secret motives that sway the wicked and His Plan must ultimately prevail, however much appearances may be against it at any given time.

77. Doth not man see that it is We Who created him from sperm?(4023) yet behold! he (stands forth) as an open adversary!

4023 Man's disobedience and folly are all the more surprising, seeing that-apart from Allah's greatness and mercy-man is himself such a puny creature, created out of something that is less than a drop in the vast ocean of Existence . Yet man has the hardihood to stand out and dispute with his Maker, and institute

idle comparisons as in the next verse!

78. And he makes comparisons(4024) for Us, and forgets his own (origin and) Creation: He says, "Who can give life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?"

4024 That is, man thinks that Allah is like His creatures, who at best have very limited powers, or man draws idle parallels like that mentioned at the end of this verse. 'Who can give life to dry bones, and decomposed ones at that?' Man certainly cannot, and no power in nature can do that. But why compare the powers and capacities of Allah's creatures with the powers and capacities of the Creator? The first creation-out of nothing-is far more difficult for us to imagine than a second or subsequent process for which there is already a basis. And Allah has power over all things.

79. Say, "He will give them life Who created them for the first time!(4025) for He is Well-versed in every kind of creation!-

4025 Allah's creative artistry is evident in every phase of nature, and it works every minute or second. The more man understands himself and the things within his reach, the more he realises this. How foolish, then, for anyone to set imaginary limits to Allah's power? There are more ways of creation than are dreamt of in man's imagination.

80. "The same Who produces for you fire out of(4026) the green tree, when behold! ye kindle therewith (your own fires)!

4026 Even older and more primitive than the method of striking fire against steel and flint is the method of using twigs of trees for the purpose. In the *E.B.*, 14th edition, 9:262, will be found a picture of British Guyana boys making a fire by rotating a stick in a round hole in a piece of wood lying on the ground. The Arab methord was to use a woodden instument called the *Zinad.* It consisted of two pieces to be rubbed together. The upper was called the *'Ajar or Zand,* and the lower the *Markh.* The *Markh* is a twig from a kind of spreading tree, the *Cynanchuin viminale,* of which the branches are bare, without leaves or thorns. When they are tangled together, and a wind blows, they get ignited and strike fire (Lane's Arabic Lexicon). In modern Arabic *Zand* is by analogy applied to the flint piece used for striking fire with steel.

81. "Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like(4027) thereof?" - Yea, indeed! for He is the Creator Supreme, of skill and knowledge (infinite)!

4027 *Cf.* 79:27. Which is the more difficult to create-man, or the heavens and the earth, with all creatures? Allah created the heavens and the earth, with all creatures, and He can create worlds and worlds like these ininfinity. To him it is small matter to raise you up for the Hereafter!

82. Verily, when He intends(4028) a thing, His Command is, "be", and it is!

4028 And His creation is not dependent on time, on instruments or means, or any conditions whatsoever. Existence waits on His Will, or Plan, or Intention. The moment He wills a thing, it becomes His Word or Command, and the thing forthwith comes into existence. *Cf.* 2:177; 16:40 , n. 2066; etc.

83. So glory to Him in Whose hands is the dominion of all things: and to Him will ye(4029) be all brought back.

4029 All things were created by Allah; are maintained by Him; and will go back to Him. But the point of special interest to man is that man will also be brought back to Allah and is answerable to Him, and to Him alone. This Message is the core of Revelation; it explains the meaning of the Hereafter; and it fitly closes a Surah specially connected with the name *(Ya Sin)* of the Prophet.

37. Al Saffat (Those Ranged in Ranks)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By(4030) those who range themselves in ranks,(4031)

4030 At a later stage, we shall study the general meaning of the adjurations in the Qur'an indicated by the particle *wa*. See App. XI, p. 1694. Here we may note that the last Surah *(Ya Sin)* practically began with the adjuration "by the Qur'an, full of wisdom", emphasising the fact that Revelation was the evidence by which we could learn the highest wisdom of the spiritual world. Here our attention is called in three verses or clauses, to three definite attitudes which illustrate the triumph of Good and the frustration of Evil. See the notes following.

4031 Two questions arise: (1) are the doers of the three things noted in verses 1-3 the same persons, whose actions or qualities are differently described, or are they three distinct sets of persons? (2) in either case, who are they? As to (1) the most authoritative view is that the three clauses describe the same set of persons in different aspects. As to (2) some take them to refer to angels, and others understand by them the good men, the men of God, who strive and range themselves in Allah's service. The words are perfectly general, and I interpret them to refer to both classes. The feminine form is grammatically used in Arabic idiom for the indefinite plural. In 37:165 below, the word *saffun* is used in the definite plural, and seems to be spoken by these beings, angels or men of God or both, according to how we interpret this verse.

2. And so are strong in repelling (evil),(4032)

4032 The three acts in verses 1-3 are consecutive, as shown by the particle *fa*. I understand them to mean that angels and good men (1) are ever ready to range themselves in ranks in the service of Allah and work in perfect discipline and accord at all times; (2) that they check and frustrate evil wherever they find it and they are strengthened in doing so by their discipline and their ranging themselves in ranks; and (3) that this service furthers the Kingdom of Allah and proclaims His Message and His glory to all creation.

3. And thus proclaim the Message (of Allah.!

4. Verily, verily, your Allah is one!-(4033)

4033 That divine Message is summed up in the gospel of Divine Unity, on which the greatest emphasis is laid: "verily, verily your God is One". It is a fact intimately connected with our own life and destiny.' *Your* Lord is one Who cares for you and cherishes you; you are dear to Him. And He is *One*. it is only He that you have to look to, the source of all goodness, love, and power. You are not the sport of many contending, forces or blind chances. There is complete harmony and unity in heaven and you have to put yourselves into unison with it-by discipline in ranks, by unity of plan and purpose in repelling evil, and by concerted action in promoting the Kingdom of God.' Here is the mystery of the manifold variety of creation pointing to the absolute Unity of the Creator.

5. Lord of the heavens and of the earth and all between them, and Lord of every point at the rising of the sun!(4034)

4034 Allah is the Lord of everything that exists-'the heavens and the earth, and all between them'. He is the Lord of the *Maskariq-of* every point at the rising of the sun. As the Commentators tell us, there are in the solar year only two equinoctial days, when the sun rises due east: on every other the sun rises at a shifting point either north or south of due east. In 7:137 we have *mashariq al ardi wa magharibaha,* where the plural of the words for East and West is negligible, as the conjunction of the two embraces all points. The same may be said of 70:40, where Allah is called "Lord of all points in the East and the West". If we are speaking of longitudes, they may embrace all latitudes. In 55:17 Allah is called "Lord of the *two* Easts and the *two* Wests", referring to the extreme points in either case. A cursory reader may ask, why is only the East referred to here? The reply is that it is not so much the East as the rising of the sun, on which stress is laid. The Arabic *mashriq* or *mashariq* is close enough to the root word *sharaqa,* to suggest, not so much the East as the rising of the sun, especially when the plural form is used. The glorious sun rises from different points, as seen by us, but it illuminates the whole heaven and earth. It is an emblem of Unity.

6. We have indeed decked the lower heaven(4035) with beauty (in) the stars,-(4036)

4035 *Cf.* 67:3-5.

4036 'Stars' may be taken here in the popular sense, as referring to fixed stars, planets, comets, shooting stars, etc. On a clear night the beauty of the starry heavens is proverbial. Here they are meant to illustrate two points: (1) their marvellous beauty and their groupings and motions (apparent or real) manifest and typify the Design and Harmony of the One true Creator: and (2) the power and glory behind them typify that there is a guard against the assaults of Evil (see verse 7 below).

7. (For beauty) and for guard(4037) against all obstinate rebellious evil spirits,

4037 Verses 7-11 seem to refer to shooting stars- *Cf.* 15:17 -18, and notes 1951-53. The heavens typify not only beauty but power. The Good in Allah's world is guarded and protected against every assault of Evil. The Evil is not part of the heavenly system: it is a thing in outlawry, merely a self-willed rebellion-"cast away on every side, repulsed under a perpetual penalty" (verses 8-9).

8. (So) they should not strain their ears in the direction of the Exalted Assembly(4038) but be cast away from every side,

4038 We can form a mental picture of the Court of the Most High, in the highest heaven, conforming to the highest idea we can form of goodness, beauty, purity, and grandeur. The Exalted Assembly of angels is given some knowledge of the Plan and Will of Allah. Evil is altogether foreign to such an atmosphere, but is actuated by feelings of jealousy and curiosity. It tries to approach by stealth and overhear something from the august Assembly. It is repulsed and pursued by a flaming fire, of which we can form some idea in our physical world by the piercing trail of a shooting star.

9. Repulsed, for they are under a perpetual penalty,

10. Except such as snatch away something by stealth, and they are pursued by a flaming(4039) fire, of piercing brightness.

4039 See last note and *Cf.* 15:18 and notes 1953-54.

11. Just ask their(4040) opinion: are they the more difficult to create, or the (other) beings We have created? Them have We created out of a sticky clay!(4041)

4040 *Their,* "they" are the doubters, the evil ones, the deniers of Allah's grace and mercy, who laugh at Revelation and disbelieve in a Hereafter. Are they more important or more difficult to create than the wonderful variety of beings in Allah's spacious Creation? Do they forget their own lowly state, as having been created from muddy clay?

4041 *Cf.* 6:2; 7:12 ; 32:7; etc.

12. Truly dost thou marvel,(4042) while they ridicule,

4042 It is indeed strange that unregenerate man should forget, on the one hand, his lowly origin, and on the other hand, his high Destiny, as conferred upon him by the grace and mercy of Allah. The indictment of him here comprises four counts: (1) they ridicule the teaching of Truth; (2) instead of profiting by admonition, they pay no heed; (3) when Allah's Signs are brought home to them, they ridicule them as much as they ridiculed the teaching of Truth: and (4) when they have to acknowledge incontestable facts, they give them false names like "sorcery", which imply fraud or something which has no relation to their life, although the facts touch the inner springs of their life intimately *(Cf.* 46:7).

13. And, when they are admonished, pay no heed,-

14. And, when they see a Sign, turn it to mockery,

15. And say, "This is nothing but evident sorcery!

16. "What! when we die, and become dust and bones, shall we (then) be raised up (again)

17. "And also our fathers(4043) of old?"

4043 Although the Hereafter, and the spiritual life of which it is a corollary, are the most solid facts in our intelligent existence, materialists deny them. They cannot believe that they could have any existence beyond the grave-still less their ancestors who died ages and ages ago: how could they ever come to life again?

18. Say thou: "Yea, and ye shall then be humiliated (on account of your evil)."(4044)

4044 They are assured that the future life is a solid fact, but that it will be in very different conditions from those they know now. All their present arrogance will have been humbled in the dust. There will be another plane, in which souls will have experiences quite different from those in their probationary life here. In that life the virtues they lacked will count, and the arrogance they hugged will be brought low (*Cf.* 40:60).

19. Then it will be a single (compelling) cry;(4045) and behold, they will begin to see!(4046)

4045 *Cf.* 36:29, 49, and 53.

4046 Their spiritual blindness will then leave them. But they will be surprised at the suddenness of their disillusion.

20. They will say, "Ah! Woe to us! This is the Day of Judgment!"

21. (A voice will say,) "This is the Day(4047) of Sorting Out, whose truth ye (once) denied!"

4047 The Day of Judgement is the day of sorting out. *Cf.* 36:59. Good and evil will finally be separated, unlike the apparently inexplicable conditions in the present probationary life, when they seem to be mixed together (see also n. 4718).

22. "Bring ye up", it shall be said, "The wrong-doers and their wives,(4048) and the things they worshipped-

4048 That is, if their wives were also wrongdoers. They are separately mentioned, because the Arabic phrase for "wrongdoers" is of the masculine gender. All the associates in wrongdoing will be marshalled together. There will be personal responsibility: neither husband nor wife can lay the blame on the other.

23. "Besides Allah, and lead them to the Way to the (Fierce) Fire!

24. "But stop them,(4049) for they must be asked:

4049 The scene here is after judgement. As, in an earthly tribunal, the prisoner or his advocate is asked why sentence should not be pronounced upon him, so here those who are proved to have been guilty of wrong are allowed to consider if anything or anyone can help them. Then comes the exposure of the misleaders.

25. "´What is the matter with you that ye help not each other?´"(4050)

4050 Obviously no one can stand and intercede, for it is a question of personal responsibility for each soul. No one can help another.

26. Nay, but that day they shall submit (to Judgment);(4051)

4051 All the previous arrogance of this life will be gone, but they will face each other, and those who were given a false lead, as in the story of Pharaoh *(Cf.* 20:79), will question their misleaders as in the following verses.

27. And they will turn to one another, and question one another.

28. They will say: "It was ye who used to come to us from the right hand (of power and authority)!"(4052)

4052 This is the mutual recrimination of the sinners-those who sinned, against those whose instigation or evil example led them into sin. The misleaders in the life here below often used their power and influence to spread evil. The "right hand" is the hand of power and authority. Instead of using it for righteous purposes, they used it for evil,-selfishly for their own advantage, and mischievously for the degradation of others (*Cf.* 37:93).

29. They will reply: "Nay, ye yourselves had no Faith!(4053)

4053 But the fact that others mislead, or that evil example is before us, does not justify us in falling from right conduct. Faith should save us from the fall. But if we have ourselves no Faith-in righteousness, or a future life, or the reality of Allah's Law, how can we blame others? The misleaders can well say, 'You will be judged according to your misdeeds!" The responsibility is personal, and cannot be shifted on the other. The others may get a double punishment,—for their own evil, and for misleading their weaker brethren. But the weaker brethren cannot go free from responsibility of their own deeds; for evil means a personal rebellion against Allah, if we believe in a personal God. Evil has no authority over us, except insofar as we deliberately choose it.

30. "Nor had we any authority over you. Nay, it was ye who were a people in obstinate rebellion!

31. "So now has been proved true,(4054) against us, the word of our Lord that we shall indeed (have to) taste (the punishment of our sins).

4054 Allah's decree of justice requires that every soul should taste the consequences of its own sins, and that decree must be fulfilled. No excuses can serve. It is only Allah's mercy that can save.

32. "We led you astray: for truly(4055) we were ourselves astray."

4055 Further, the misleaders can well urge against those who reproach them for misleading them: "How could you expect anything better from us? You were warned by Allah's Message that we were astray."

33. Truly, that Day, they will (all) share in the Penalty.

34. Verily that is how We shall deal with Sinners.

35. For they, when they were told that there is no god except Allah, would puff themselves up with Pride,(4056)

4056 Selfish arrogance was the seed of sin and rebellion: 2:34 (of Satan): 28:39 (of Pharaoh); etc. It is that kind of arrogance which prevents man from mending his life and conduct. When he speaks of ancestral ways, or public opinion, or national honour, he is usually thinking of himself or of a small clique which thrives on injustice. The recognition of Allah, the one true God, as the only standard of life and conduct, the Eternal Reality, cuts out Self, and is therefore disagreeable to Sin. If false gods are imagined, who themselves would have weaknesses that fit in with sin, they give countenance to evils, and it becomes difficult to give them up, unless Allah's grace comes to our assistance. (R).

36. And say: "What! shall we give up our gods for the sake of a Poet possessed?"(4057)

4057 Possessed of an evil spirit, or mad. Such was the charge which the Unbelievers sometimes levelled at the Prophet in the early stages of his preaching.

37. Nay! he has come with the (very) Truth, and he confirms (the Message of) the messengers (before him).(4058)

4058 The message of Islam, so far from being "mad" or in any way peculiar, is eminently conformable to reason and the true facts of nature as created by Allah. It is the Truth in the purest sense of the term, and confirms the Message of all true Messengers that ever lived.

38. Ye shall indeed taste of the Grievous Penalty;-

39. But it will be no more than the retribution(4059) of (the Evil) that ye have wrought;-

4059 Justice demands that those who sow evil should reap the fruit, but the punishment is due to their own conduct and not to anything external to themselves.

40. But the sincere (and devoted) Servants of Allah,-

41. For them is a Sustenance(4060) determined,(4061)

4060 *Cf.* 7:50 . *Sustenance,* metaphorical sense, correlated with the Fruits mentioned below: see next verse.

4061 *Determined: Ma'lum:* the reward of the Blessed will not be a chance or a fleeting thing. It will follow a firm Decree of Allah, on principles that can be known and understood.

42. Fruits (Delights);(4062) and they (shall enjoy) honour and dignity,

4062 *Fruits: Cf.* 36:57, and n. 4003. The spiritual Delights are figured forth from parallel experiences in our present life, and follow an ascending order: Food and Fruits; Gardens of Bliss, (with all their charm, design, greenery, birds' songs, fountains, etc.); the Home of Happiness and Dignity, with congenial company seated on Thrones; Delicious Drinks from crystal Springs, for social pleasure; and the society of Companions of the opposite sex, with beauty and charm but none of the grossness too often incidental to such companionship in this life.

43. In Gardens of Felicity,

44. Facing each other on Thrones (of Dignity):

45. Round will be passed to them a Cup from a clear-flowing fountain,

46. Crystal-white, of a taste delicious to those who drink (thereof),

47. Free from headiness;(4063) nor will they suffer intoxication therefrom.

4063 The passing round of the social cup, as in the case of odier pleasures, is without any of the drawbacks and evil accompaniments of the pleasures of this world, which are taken as types. In drink there is no intoxication: in fruit there is no satiety. *Cf.* Dante: "The bread of Angels upon which One liveth here and grows not sated Sby it." *(Paradiso,* Canto II., Longfellow's translation.)

48. And besides them will be chaste women, restraining their glances, with big eyes(4064) (of wonder and beauty).

4064 In the emblem used here, again, the pure type of chaste womanhood is figured. They are chaste, not bold with their glances: but their eyes are big with wonder and beauty, prefiguring grace, innocence, and a refined capacity of appreciation and admiration.

49. As if they were(4065) (delicate) eggs closely guarded.

4065 This is usually understood to refer to the delicate complexion of a beautiful woman, which is compared to the transparent shell of eggs in the nest, closely guarded by the mother-bird; the shell is warm and free from stain. In 55:58 the phrase used is "like rubies and coral", referring to the red or pink of a beautiful complexion.

50. Then they will turn to one another and question one another.(4066)

4066 *Cf.* above, 37:27, where the same phrase is used in the reverse conditions. In each case there is a going back to the earlier memories or experiences of this life.

51. One of them will start the talk and say: "I had an intimate companion (on the earth),(4067)

4067 This companion was a sceptic, who laughed at Religion and a Hereafter. How the tables are now turned! The devout man backed up his Faith with a good life and is now in Bliss: the other was a cynic and made a mess of his life, and is now burning in the Fire.(R)

52. "Who used to say, ´what! art thou amongst those who bear witness to the Truth (of the Message)?

53. "´When we die and become dust and bones, shall we indeed receive rewards and punishments?´"

54. (A voice) said: "Would ye like to look down?"

55. He looked down and saw him in the midst of the Fire.(4068)

4068 He is allowed a peep into the state which he so narrowly escaped by the grace of Allah.

56. He said: "By Allah. thou wast little short of bringing me to perdition!

57. "Had it not been for the Grace of my Lord,(4069) I should certainly have been among those brought (there)!

4069 And he gratefully acknowledges his shortcomings: "I should have been a sinner just like this, but for the grace of Allah!" He sees that if he had erred it would have been no excuse to plead the other man's example. He had Faith and was saved, to walk in the path of righteousness.

58. "Is it (the case) that we shall not die,

59. "Except our first death, and that we(4070) shall not be punished?"

4070 After he realises the great danger from which he narrowly escaped, his joy is so great that he can hardly believe it! Is the danger altogether past now? Are the portals of death closed forever? Is he safe now from the temptations which will bring him to ruin and punishment? *(Cf,* 44:56)

60. Verily this is the supreme achievement!(4071)

4071 The answer is: Yes. "Beyond the flight of Time, Beyond the realm of Death. There surely is some blessed clime, Where Life is not a breath!" In the words of Longfellow this was an aspiration on this earth. In the Hereafter it is a realisation! Some interpret verses 60-62 as a continuation of the speech of the man in heaven. The meaning would in that case be the same.

61. For the like of this let all strive, who wish to strive.

62. Is that the better entertainment or the Tree of Zaqqum?(4072)

4072 *Cf.* 17:60, n. 2250. This bitter tree of Hell is a symbol of the contrast with the beautiful Garden of heaven with its delicious fruits.

63. For We have truly made it (as) a trial(4073) for the wrong-doers.

4073 *Cf.* 44:43-46.This dreadful bitter Tree of Hell is truly a trial to the wrongdoers. (1) It grows at the bottom of Hell; (2) even its fruit-stalks, which should have been tender, are like the heads of devils; (3) its produce is eaten voraciously; (4) on top of it is a boiling mixture to cut up their entrails (see next note); and (5) every time they complete this round of orgies they return to the same game. A truly lurid picture, but more lurid in reality are the stages in spiritual Evil. (1) It takes its rise in the lowest depths of corrupted human nature; (2) its tenderest affections are degraded to envy and hate: (3) the appetite for Evil grows with what it feeds on; (4) its "cures" serve but to aggravate the disease; and (5) the chain of evil is unending; one round is followed by another in interminable succession.

64. For it is a tree that springs out of the bottom of Hell-Fire:

65. The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of devils:

66. Truly they will eat thereof(4074) and fill their bellies therewith.

4074 The parable of fruits and drinks in the contrasted fortunes of the Good and the Evil is further

67. Then on top of that they will be given a mixture made of boiling water.

68. Then shall their return(4075) be to the (Blazing) Fire.

4075 When they eat of the *zaqqum* in the lowest depths of hell, they are apparently brought up to drink of the mixture as a further punishment, after which they go back to repeat the round.

69. Truly they found their fathers on the wrong Path;

70. So they (too) were rushed(4076) down on their footsteps!

4076 A grim reproach. You found your fathers doing wrong; and you must rush headlong in their footsteps to perdition!'

71. And truly before them, many of the ancients went astray;-

72. But We sent aforetime,(4077) among them, (messengers) to admonish them;-

4077 It is human to err. The error is forgiven if there is repentance and amendment. The point is that Allah in His mercy at all times in history sent messengers and teachers to give His Message, and men deliberately rejected that Message.

73. Then see what was the end of those who(4078) were admonished (but heeded not),-

4078 It is on the reception or rejection of Allah's teachings and guidance that judgement will come. In this world itself, see what is the teaching of history. Unrighteousness and wrongdoing never prosper in the long run.

74. Except the sincere (and devoted)(4079) Servants of Allah.

4079 But there is always a band of sincere and devoted men who serve Allah, and the highest spiritual life is open to them *(Cf.* 37:160).

Note that this verse occurs at 37:40 above, where the argument of the difference between the fates of the righteous and the unrighteous was begun. Here it is rounded off with the same phrase, and now we proceed to take illustrations from the early Prophets.

75. (In the days of old), Noah cried to Us,(4080) and We are the best to hear prayer.

4080 *Cf.* 21:76-77. The story of Noah occurs in many places; here the point is that when men gird themselves against evil, Allah protects them, and Evil cannot triumph against Allah's Plan.

76. And We delivered him and his people from the Great Calamity,(4081)

4081 The Deluge, the Flood of Noah. The main story will be found in 11:25 -48.

77. And made his progeny to endure (on this earth);(4082)

4082 Noah's posterity survived the Rood in the Ark , while the rest perished.

78. And We left (this blessing) for him among generations(4083) to come in later times:

4083 His name is remembered forever, commencing a new era in religious history. Note that the words in verses 78-81, with slight modifications, form a sort of refrain to the following paragraphs about Abraham, Moses, and Elias, but not about Lot and Jonah. Lot was a nephew of Abraham, and may be supposed to belong to the story of Abraham. Jonah's career nearly ended in a tragedy for himself, and his people got a further lease of power "for a time" (37:148). And both Lot and Jonah belong to a limited local tradition.

79. "Peace and salutation to Noah among the nations!"(4084)

4084 The story of the Flood is found in some form or other among all nations, and not only among those who follow the Mosaic tradition. In Greek tradition the hero of the flood is Deukalion, with his wife Pyrrha; in Hindu tradition *(Shatapatha Brahmana and Mahabharata)* it is the sage Manuand the Fish. The Chinese tradition of a great Flood is recorded in *Shu-King.* Among American Indians the tradition was common to many tribes.

80. Thus indeed do we reward those who do right.

81. For he was one of our believing Servants.

82. Then the rest we overwhelmed in the Flood.

83. Verily among those who followed his Way was Abraham.(4085)

4085 The main story will be found in 21:51-73; but the episode about his readiness and that of his son to submit to the most extreme form of self-sacrifice under trial (in verses 102-107 below) is told here for the first time, as this Surah deals with the theme, "Not my will, but Thine be done!" In "followed his way", the pronoun "his" refers to Noah, "he", of verse 81 above.

84. Behold! he approached his Lord with a sound heart.(4086)

4086 "A sound heart"; *qalb salim:* a heart that is pure, and unaffected by the diseases that afflict others, As the heart in Arabic is taken to be not only the seat of feelings and affections, but also of intelligence and resulting action, it implies the whole character. *Cf.* Abraham's title *of Hanif (the* True); 2:135 and n. 134. *Cf.* also 26:89: "only he will prosper who brings to Allah a sound heart."

85. Behold! he said to his father and to his people, "What is that which ye worship?

86. "Is it a falsehood- gods other than Allah. that ye desire?(4087)

4087 False worship—worship of idols or stars or symbols, or Mammon or Self-is due either to false and degrading conceptions of Allah, or to a sort of make-believe, where practice is inconsistent with knowledge or ignores the inner promptings of Conscience. Abraham's challenge to his people is: 'Are you fools or hypocrites?'

87. "Then what is your idea about the Lord of the Worlds?"(4088)

4088 'Do you not realise that the real Creator is One-above all the forms and superstitions that you associate with Him?'

88. Then did he cast a glance at the Stars.

89. And he said, "I am indeed sick (at heart)!"(4089)

4089 The grief was really preying on his mind and soul, that he should be associated with such falsehoods. His father himself was among the chief supporters of such falsehoods, and his people were given up wholly to them. He could not possibly share in their mummeries, and they left him in disgust. Then he made his practical protest in the manner narrated in 21:56 -64.

90. So they turned away from him, and departed.

91. Then did he turn to their gods and said, "will ye not eat (of the offerings before you)?...

92. "What is the matter with you that ye speak not (intelligently)?"

93. Then did he turn upon them, striking (them)(4090) with the right hand.(4091)

4090 See the reference in the last note.

4091 *With the right hand:* as the right hand is the hand of power, the phrase means that he struck them with might and main and broke them *(Cf.* 37:28).

94. Then came (the worshippers) with hurried steps, and faced (him).

95. He said: "Worship ye that which ye have (yourselves) carved?(4092)

4092 His action was a challenge, and he drives home the challenge now with argument. 'Do you worship your own handiwork? Surely worship is due to Him Who made you and made possible your handiwork!'

96. "But Allah has created you and your handwork!"

97. They said, "Build him a furnace, and throw him(4093) into the blazing fire!"

4093 The argument of Abraham was so sound that it could not be met by argument. In such cases Evil resorts to violence, or secret plotting. Here there was both violence and secret plotting. The violence consisted in throwing him into a blazing Furnace. But by the mercy of Allah the fire did not harm him (21:69), and so they resorted to plotting. But the plotting, as the next verse (37:98) shows, was a boomerang that recoiled on their own heads.

98. (This failing), they then sought a stratagem against him,(4094) but We made them the ones most humiliated!

4094 *Cf.* 21:71. Their plot against the righteous Abraham failed. Abraham migrated from the country (Chaldea, Babylon , and Assyria) and prospered in Syria and Palestine . It was his persecutors that suffered humiliation.

99. He said: "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me!(4095)

4095 This was the *Hijrah* of Abraham. He left his people and his land, because the Truth was dearer to him than the ancestral falsehoods of his people. He trusted himself to Allah, and under Allah's guidance he laid the foundations of great peoples. See n. 2725 to 21:69.

100. "O my Lord! Grant me a righteous (son)!"

101. So We gave him the good news(4096) of a boy ready to suffer and forbear.(4097)

4096 This was in the fertile land of Syria and Palestine . The boy thus born was, according to Muslim tradition, the first-born son of Abraham, *viz.,* IsmaTl. The name itself is from the root *Sami'a,* to hear, because Allah had heard Abraham's prayer (verse 100). Abrahan's age when IsmaTl was born was 86 (Gen. 16:16). (R).

4097 The boy's character was to be *Halim,* which I have translated "ready to suffer and forbear". This title is also applied to Abraham (in 9:114 and 11:75). It refers to the patient way in which both father and son cheerfully offered to suffer any self-sacrifice in order to obey the Command of Allah. See next verse.

102. Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I see in vision(4098) that I offer thee in sacrifice:(4099) Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one practising Patience and Constancy!"

4098 Where did this vision occur? The Muslim view is that it was in or near Makkah. Some would identify it with the valley of Mina, six miles north of Makkah, where a commemoration sacrifice is annually celebrated as a rite of the Hajj on the tenth of *Dhu alHijjah,* the *'Id* of Sacrifice, in memory of this Sacrifice of Abraham and IsmaTl (see n. 217 to 2:197). Others say that the original place of sacrifice was near the hill of Marwah (the companion hill to Safa, 2:158), which is associated with the infancy of Ismail.

4099 At what stage in Abraham's history did this occur? See n. 2725 to 21:69. It was obviously after his arrival in the land of Cannan and after IsmaTl had grown up to years of discretion. Was it before or after the building of the Kab'ah (2:127)? There are no data on which this question can be answered. But we may suppose it was before that event, and that event may itself have been commemorative.

103. So when they had both(4100) submitted their wills (to Allah., and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice),(4101)

4100 Note that the sacrifice was demanded of *both* Abraham and IsmaTl. It was a trial of the will of the father and the son. By way of trial the father had the command conveyed to him in a vision. He consulted the son. The son readily consented, and offered to stand true to his promise if his self-sacrifice was really required. The whole thing is symbolical. Allah does not require the flesh and blood of animals (22:37), much less of human beings. But he does require the giving of our whole being to Allah, the symbol of which is that we should give up something very dear to us, if Duty requires that sacrifice, (R).

4101 Our version may be compared with the Jewish-Christian version of the present Old Testament. The Jewish tradition, in order to glorify the younger branch of the family, descended from Isaac, ancestor of the Jews, as against the elder branch, descended from Isma'il, ancestor of the Arabs, refers this sacrifice to Isaac (Gen. 22:1-18). Now Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old (Gen. 21:5), while Isma'il was born to Abraham when Abraham was 86 years old (Gen. 16:16). Isma'il was therefore 14 years older than Isaac. During his first 14 years Isma'il was the *only* son of Abraham; at no time was Isaac the *only* son of Abraham. Yet, in speaking of the sacrifice, the Old Testament says (Gen. 22:2): 'And He said, Take now thy son, thine *only* son Issac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah : and offer him there for a burnt offering..." This slip shows at any rate which was the older version, and how it was overlaid, like the present Jewish records, in the interests of a tribal religion. The " land of Moriah " is not clear: it was three days journey from Abraham's place (Gen. 22:4). There is less warrant for identifying it with the hill of Moriah on which Jerusalem was afterwards built than with the hill of Marwah which is identified with the Arab tradition about Isma'il.

104. We called out to him,(4102) "O Abraham!

4102 In the Biblical version Isaac's consent is not taken: in fact Isaac asks, 'where is the lamb for sacrifice?' and is told that 'God would provide it'. It is a complete human sacrifice like those to Moloch. In our version it is as much a sacrifice by the will of Isma'il as by that of Abraham. And in any case it is symbolic: "this was obviously a trial"; "thou hast already fulfilled thy vision": etc.

105. "Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" - thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

106. For this was obviously a trial-

107. And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice:(4103)

4103 The adjective qualifying "sacrifice" here, *'azim,* (great, momentous) may be understood both in a literal and a figurative sense. In a literal sense it implies that a fine sheep or ram was substituted symbolically. The figurative sense is even more important. It was indeed a great and momentous occasion, when two men, with concerted will, "ranged themselves in the ranks" of those to whom self-sacrifice in the service of Allah was the supreme thing in life. In this sense, said Jesus, "he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it", (Matt. 10:39). (R).

108. And We left (this blessing)(4104) for him among generations (to come) in later times:

4104 *Cf.* above, 37:78-81 and n. 4083, also 43:28.

109. "Peace and salutation to Abraham!"

110. Thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

111. For he was one of our believing Servants.

112. And We gave him(4105) the good news of Isaac - a prophet,- one of the Righteous.

4105 Isaac was Abraham's second son, born of Sarah, when Abraham was 100 years of age. See n. 4101. He was also blessed and became the ancestor of the Jewish people. See next note.

113. We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are (some) that do right, and (some) that obviously(4106) do wrong, to their own souls.

4106 So long as the Children of Israel upheld the righteous banner of Allah, they enjoyed Allah's blessing and their history is a portion of sacred history. When they fell from grace, they did not stop Allah's Plan: they injured their own souls.

114. Again (of old) We bestowed Our favour on Moses and Aaron,(4107)

4107 The story of Moses is told in numerous passages of the Qur'an. The passages most illustrative of the present passage will be found in 28:4 (oppression

of the Israelites in Egypt) and 20:77-79 (the Israelites triumphant over their enemies when the latter were drowned in the Red Sea).

115. And We delivered them and their people from (their) Great Calamity;(4108)

4108 What could have been a greater calamity to them than that they should have been held in slavery by the Egyptians, that their male children should have been killed and their female children should have been saved alive for the Egyptians?

116. And We helped them, so they overcame (their troubles);(4109)

4109 The Israelites were delivered by three steps mentioned inverses 114,115, and 116 respectively; but the consummation of Allah's favour on them was (verses 117-118) the Revelation given to them, which guided them on the Straight Way, so long as they preserved the Revelation intact and followed its precepts. The three steps were: (1) the divine commission to Moses and Aaron: (2) the deliverance from bondage; and (3) the triumphant crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's army.

117. And We gave them the Book which helps(4110) to make things clear;

4110 *Mustabin* has a slightly different force from *Mubin.* I have translated the former by "which *helps* to make things clear", and the latter by "which makes things clear"—apt descriptions as applied to the Tawrah and the Qur'an.

118. And We guided them to the Straight Way.

119. And We left (this blessing)(4111) for them among generations (to come) in later times:

4111 See above, 37:78-81 and n. 4083.

120. "Peace and salutation to Moses and Aaron!"

121. Thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

122. For they were two of our believing Servants.

123. So also was Elias(4112) among those sent (by Us).

4112 See n. 905 to 6:85. Elias is the same as Elijah, whose story will be found in the Old Testament in 1 Kings 17-19 and 2 Kings 1-2. Elijah lived in the reign of Ahab (B.C. 896-874) and Ahaziah (B.C. 874-872), kings of the (northern) kingdom of Israel or Samaria . He was a prophet of the desert, like John the Baptist— unlike our Prophet, who took part in, controlled, and guided all the affairs of his people. Both Ahab and Ahaziah were prone to lapse into the worship of Ba'l, the sun-god worshipped in Syria . That worship also included the worship of nature-powers and procreative powers, as in the Hindu worship of the Lingam, and led to many abuses. King Ahab had married a princess of Sidon , Jezebel, a wicked woman who led her husband to forsake Allah and adopt Ba'1-worship. Elijah denounced all Ahab's sins as well as the sins of Ahaziah and had to flee for his life. Eventually, according to the Old Testament (2 Kings, 2:11) he was taken up in a whirlwind to heaven in a chariot of fire after he had left his mantle with Elisha the prophet. (R).

124. Behold, he said to his people, "Will ye not fear ((Allah))?

125. "Will ye call upon Ba'l(4113) and forsake the Best of Creators,-

4113 For Ba'1-worship see last note.

126. "(Allah), your Lord and Cherisher and the Lord and Cherisher of your fathers of old?"

127. But they rejected him,(4114) and they will certainly be called up (for punishment),-

4114 They persecuted him and he had to flee for his life. Eventually he disappeared mysteriously; see n. 4112.

128. Except the sincere and devoted Servants of Allah (among them).

129. And We left (this blessing)(4115) for him among generations (to come) in later times:

4115 See above, 37:78-81, and n. 4083.

130. "Peace and salutation to such as Elias!"(4115-A)

4115-A Ilyasin may be an alternative form of Ilyas: *Cf.* Sayna'a (23:20) and Sinin (95:2). Or it may be the plural of Ilyas, meaning "such people as Ilyas".

131. Thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

132. For he was one of our believing Servants.

133. So also was Lut(4116) among those sent (by Us).

4116 The best illustration of this passage about Lut will be found in 7:80-84. He was a prophet sent to Sodom and Gomorrah , Cities of the Plain, by the Dead Sea . The inhabitants were given over to abominable crimes, against which he preached. They insulted him and threatened to expel him. But Allah in His mercy saved him and his family, with one exception, (see the following note), and then destroyed the Cities.

134. Behold, We delivered him and his adherents, all

135. Except an old woman who was among those who lagged behind:(4117)

4117 *Cf.* 7:83, and n. 1051. Lot 's wife had no faith: she lagged behind, and perished in the general ruin.

136. Then We destroyed the rest.

137. Verily, ye pass(4118) by their (sites), by day-

4118 *Cf.* 15:76, and n. 1998. The tract where they lay is situated on the highway to Syria where the Arab caravans travelled regularly, "by day and by night". Could not future generations learn wisdom from the destruction of those who did wrong?

138. And by night: will ye not understand?

139. So also was Jonah(4119) among those sent (by Us).

4119 For illustrative passages, see 21:87-88, n. 2744, and 68:48-50. Jonah's mission was to the city of Nineveh , then steeped in wickedness. He was rejected and he denounced Allah's wrath on them, but they repented and obtained Allah's forgiveness. But Jonah "departed in wrath" (21:87), forgetting that Allah has Mercy as well as forgiveness. See the notes following, *Cf.* 10:98, n. 1478.

140. When he ran away (like a slave from captivity)(4120) to the ship (fully) laden,

4120 Jonah ran away from Nineveh like a slave from captivity. He should have stuck to his post and merged his own will in Allah's Will. He was hasty, and went off to take a ship. As if he could escape from Allah's Plan!

141. He (agreed to) cast lots,(4121) and he was condemned:

4121 The ship was fully laden and met foul weather. The sailors, according to their superstition, wanted to find out who was responsible for the ill-luck: a fugitive slave would cause such ill-luck. The lot fell on Jonah, and he was cast off.

142. Then the big Fish(4122) did swallow him, and he had done(4123) acts worthy of blame.

4122 The rivers of Mesopotamia have some huge fishes. The word used here is *Hut,* which may be a fish or perhaps a crocodile. If it were in an open northern sea, it might be a whale. The locality is not mentioned: in the Old Testament he is said to have taken ship in the port of Joppa (now Jaffa) in the Mediterranean (Jonah. 1:3), which would be not less than 600 miles from Nineveh . The Tigris river, mentioned by some of our Commentators, is more likely, and it contains some fishes of extraordinary size.

4123 See n. 4120.

143. Had it not been that he (repented and) glorified Allah,(4124)

4124 "But he cried through the depths of darkness, 'There is no god but Thee; glory to Thee! I was indeed wrong!" (21:87).

144. He would certainly have remained inside the Fish(4125) till the Day of Resurrection.

4125 This is just the idiom. This was to be the burial and the grave of Jonah. If he had not repented, he could not have got out of the body of the creature that had swallowed him, until the Day of Resurrection, when all the dead would be raised up.

145. But We cast him forth on the naked shore in a state of sickness,(4126)

4126 *Cf.* 37:89 above. His strange situation might well have caused him to be ill. He wanted fresh air and solitude. He got both in the open plain, and the abundantly shady Gourd Plant or some fruitful tree like it gave him both shade and sustenance. The Gourd is a creeper that can spread over any roof or ruined structure.

146. And We caused to grow, over him, a spreading plant of the gourd kind.

147. And We sent him (on a mission) to a hundred thousand(4127) (men) or more.

4127 The city of Nineveh was a very large city. The Old Testament says: " Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey" (Jonah, 3:3); "wherein are more than six score thousand persons" (Jonah, 4:11). In other words its circuit was about 45 miles, and its population was over a hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants.

148. And they believed; so We permitted them to enjoy (their life)(4128) for a while.

4128 They repented and believed, and Nineveh got a new lease of life. For the dates to which Jonah maybe referred, and the vicissitudes of the City's history as the seat of the Assyrian Empire, see notes 1478-1479 to 10:98.

The lessons from Jonah's story are: (1) that no man should take upon himself to judge of Allah's wrath or Allah's mercy; (2) that nevertheless Allah forgives true repentance, whether in a righteous man, or in a wicked city; and (3) that Allah's Plan will always prevail, and can never be defeated.

149. Now ask them their opinion:(4129) Is it that thy Lord has (only) daughters, and they have sons?-

4129 We begin a new argument here. The Pagan Arabs called angels daughters of Allah. They themselves were ashamed of having daughters, and preferred to have sons,

150. Or that We created the angels female, and they are witnesses (thereto)?

151. Is it not that they say, from their own invention,

152. "(Allah) has begotten children"?(4130) but they are liars!

4130 Any attribution to Allah of ideas derogatory to His Oneness and His supreme height above all creatures is likely to degrade our own conception of Allah's Universal Plan, and is condemned in the strongest terms.

153. Did He (then) choose(4131) daughters rather than sons?

4131 There is the strongest irony in this passage.

154. What is the matter with you? How judge ye?

155. Will ye not then receive admonition?

156. Or have ye an authority manifest?

157. Then bring ye your Book (of authority) if ye be truthful!

158. And they have invented a blood-relationship(4132) between Him and the Jinns: but the Jinns know (quite well) that they have indeed to appear (before his Judgment- Seat)!

4132 The angels are at least pure beings engaged in the service of Allah. But the Pagan superstitions not only connect them with Allah as daughters but even connect Allah by relationship with all kinds of spirits, good or evil! In some mythologies the most evil powers are gods or goddesses as if they belonged to the family of Allah the Creator and had some semblance of equality with Him! This, too, is repudiated in the strongest terms. For J inns see n. 929 to 6:100.

159. Glory to Allah. (He is free) from the things they ascribe (to Him)!

160. Not (so do) the Servants of Allah, sincere and devoted.(4133)

4133 Those sincere in devotion to Allah never ascribe such degrading ideas to Allah *(Cf.* 37:74).

161. For, verily, neither ye nor those ye worship-

162. Can lead (any)(4134) into temptation concerning Allah,

4134 Evil has no power over faith, truth, and sincerity. Such power as it has is over those who deliberately put themselves in the way of Destruction. It is their own will that leads them astray. If they were fortified against Evil by Faith, Patience, and Constancy, Evil would have no power to hurt them. Allah would protect them,

163. Except such as are (themselves) going to the blazing Fire!

164. (Those ranged in ranks say):(4135) "Not one of us but has a place appointed;

4135 To round off the argument of the Surah we go back to the idea with which it began. Those who range themselves in ranks for the united service of Allah (see above, 37:1 and n. 4031)—whether angels or men of God—are content to keep their ranks and do whatever service is assigned to them. It is not for them to question Allah's Plan, because they know that it is good and that it will ultimately triumph. Any seeming delays or defeats do not worry them. Nor do they ever break their ranks.

165. "And we are verily ranged in ranks (for service);

166. "And we are verily those who declare ((Allah)´s) glory!"

167. And there were those(4136) who said,

4136 There were the sceptics or Unbelievers—primarily the Pagan Arabs, but in a more extended sense, all who doubt Allah's providence or revelation.

168. "If only we had had before us a Message from those of old,

169. "We should certainly have been Servants of Allah,(4137) sincere (and devoted)!"

4137 Such men take refuge in ancestral tradition. If our forefathers had had an inkling of Revelation or miracles, or had worshipped as we are now taught to worship, we should gladly have accepted. Or if they had had anything of the miracles which other nations of old are said to have received, we could then have accepted.' But now stronger and more convincing proofs have come to them in the Qur'an in their own tongue, and they doubt and reject it.

170. But (now that the Qur´an has come), they reject it: But soon will they know!(4138)

4138 Allah's Truth will manifest itself against all odds, and the whole world will see.

171. Already has Our Word been passed before (this) to our Servants sent (by Us),

172. That they would certainly be assisted,

173. And that Our forces,-(4139) they surely must conquer.

<u>4139</u> The victory will be the victory of Allah's Truth by the forces of Allah, but every soldier in the army of Truth, who has done his duty, will be entitled to claim a share in the victory.

174. So turn thou away(4140) from them for a little while,

<u>4140</u> Addressed in the first instance to the Prophet, but good for all time. He was not to be discouraged by his initial failures. Soon came victory to him from Allah. So is it always in the struggles of truth and righteousness. The righteous can afford to ignore opposition, confident in the strength which comes from the Grace of Allah.

175. And watch them (how(4141) they fare), and they soon shall see (how thou farest)!

<u>4141</u> Watch and wait, for the Right must come to its own.

176. Do they wish (indeed)(4142) to hurry on our Punishment?

<u>4142</u> The last verse enjoined Patience under the attacks of Evil, in the knowledge that evil must be conquered at last. Evil may perhaps turn back scoffingly and say. If a punishment is to come, why not bring it on now? *Why* indeed? The answer is: when it comes, it will come like a rush by night when the enemy is overpowered, when he least expects it: when the day dawns, it is a sorry plight in which the enemy finds himself. *Cf.* 22:47 , and n. 2826: and 26:204, n. 3230.

177. But when it descends into the open space(4143) before them, evil will be the morning for those who were warned (and heeded not)!

<u>4143</u> See last note. The parable is that of an enemy camp in a plain, which is surprised and destroyed by a night attack from the hills. Evil is the plight of any survivors in the morning. Their regrets will be all the more poignant if they had had some sort of a warning before hand and had paid no heed to it!

178. So turn thou away(4144) from them for a little while,

<u>4144</u> This and the following verse repeat verses 174-175 (with a slight verbal alteration). The argument in verses 176-177 brought in a new point. When that is finished, the repetition carries us back to the main argument, and rounds off the whole Surah.

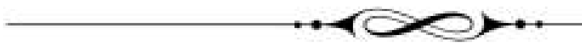
179. And watch (how they fare) and they soon shall see (how thou farest)!

180. Glory to thy Lord,(4145) the Lord of Honour and Power! (He is free) from what they ascribe (to Him)!

<u>4145</u> This and the following two verses recapitulate: (1) Glory, Honour, and Power belong to Allah; (2) No one is equal to Him; (3) He sends Messengers and revelations, and His aid will overcome all obstacles; for (4) He loves and cherishes all His Creation.

181. And Peace on the messengers!

182. And Praise to Allah, the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds.



38. Sad

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Sad:(4146) By the Qur´an, Full of Admonition:(4147) (This is the Truth).

<u>4146</u> Sad is a letter of the Arabic alphabet. It is used here as an Abbreviated Letter, for which see Appendix I (at the end of Surah 2:). See also the second para, of n. 989 to 7:1 for this particular letter. No dogmatism is permissible in trying to interpret Abbreviated Letters. But it is suggested that it may stand for *Qisas* ("Stories"), in which the dominant consonant is *s.* For this Surah is concerned mainly with the stones of David and Solomon as illustrative of the relative positions of spiritual and worldly power. Sale 's note: "It may stand for Solomon": is a real howler: for in Arabic the letter Sad does not occur at all in the name of Solomon.

<u>4147</u> *Full of admonition:* the word *dhikr is* far more comprehensive than any single word or phrase that lean think of in English: it implies (1) remembrance in a spirit of reverence; (2) recital, celebrating the praises of Allah; (3) teaching, admonition, warning; (4) Message, Revelation, as in *Ahl at dhikr,* "those who possess the Message" 16:43, and n. 2069). In Sufi phraseology it implies mystical enlightenment, both the aspiration and the attainment, for in the highest spiritual atmosphere, the two are one. Devotional exercises are also called *dhikr,* with reference to meaning (2) above.

2. But the Unbelievers (are steeped) in Self-glory(4148) and Separatism.

<u>4148</u> The great root of Evil and Unbelief is Self-glory or Arrogance, as is pointed out in several places with regard to Satan: *cf,* below, 38:74-76. This leads to Envy and Separatism, or a desire to start a peculiar doctrine or sect of one's own, instead of a desire to find common grounds of belief and life, which lead to the Religion of Unity in Allah. This teaching of Unity was what the Pagans objected to in the Prophet (verse 5 below)!

3. How many generations before them did We destroy? In the end they cried(4149) (for mercy)- when there was no longer time for being saved!

<u>4149</u> Teaching, Warning, Signs have been given by Allah to all nations and at all times, and yet nations have rebelled and gone wrong and suffered destruction. If only later generations could learn that wrongdoing results in self-destruction! For the justice of Allah merely carries out the result of their own choice and actions. At any time during their probation they could repent and obtain mercy, but their "Self-glory and Separatism" stand in the way. Ultimately they do cry for a way of escape, but it is then too late.

4. So they wonder that a Warner has come to them from among Themselves!(4150) and the Unbelievers say, "This is a sorcerer telling lies!

<u>4150</u> Their wonder is only stimulated. They are full of envy and spite against one of themselves who has been chosen by Allah to be His Messenger, and they vent their spite by making all sorts of false accusations. The man who was pre-eminent for truth and conscientious consideration, they call "a sorcerer and a liar"! *(Cf.* 51:52).

5. "Has he made the gods(4151) (all) into one Allah. Truly this is a wonderful thing!"

4151 And what is the offence of the Messenger of Unity? That he has made all their fantastic gods disappear: that in place of chaos he has brought harmony; that in place of conflict he brings peace! It is a wonderful thing, but not in the sarcastic sense in which the Unbelievers scoff at it!

6. And the leader among them go away (impatiently), (saying),(4152) "Walk ye away, and remain constant to your gods! For this is truly a thing designed (against you)!

4152 When the message of Islam was being preached in its infancy, and the Preacher and his followers were being persecuted by the Pagans, one of the devices adopted by the Pagan leaders was to get the Prophet's uncle Abu Talib to denounce or renounce his beloved nephew. A conference was held with Abu Talib for this purpose. On its failure the leaders walked away, and began to discredit the great movement by falsely giving out that it was designed against their personal influence, and to throw power into the hands of the Prophet. 'Umar's conversion occurred in the sixth year of the Mission (seventh year before the Hijrah). The circumstances connected with it (see Introduction to S. 20) greatly alarmed the Quraysh. chiefs, who, greedy of autocracy themselves, confused the issue by accusing the righteous Preacher of plotting against their power.

7. "We never heard (the like) of this among the people of these latter days:(4153) this is nothing but a made-up tale!"

4153 'Whatever may have been the case in the past', they said, 'our own immediate ancestors worshipped these idols in Makkah, and why should we give them up? Self-complacency was stronger with them than Truth; and so they call Truth "a made-up tale"! Some Commentators interpret *al Millat al Akhirah* to refer to the last religion preached before Islam, *viz.* Christianity, which had itself departed from Monotheism to Trinity. (R).

8. "What! has the Message been sent to him -(4154) (Of all persons) among us?"...but they are in doubt concerning My (Own) Message!(4155) Nay, they have not yet tasted My Punishment!

4154 Here comes in envy. 'If a Message had to come, why should it come to him, the orphan son of 'Abd Allah, and not to one of our own great men?'

4155 They have no clear idea of how Allah's Message comes! It is not a worldly thing to be given to anyone. It is a divine thing requiring spiritual preparation. If they close their eyes to it now, it will be brought home to them when they taste the consequences of their folly!

9. Or have they the treasures of the mercy of thy Lord,-(4156) the Exalted in Power, the Grantor of Bounties without measure?

4156 If they set themselves to judge Allah, have they anything to show comparable to Allah's Mercy and Power! He has both in infinite measure. Who are they to question the grant of His Mercy and Revelation to His own Chosen One?

10. Or have they the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all between? If so, let them mount up(4157) with the ropes and means (to reach that end)!

4157 Weak and puny creatures though they are, they dare to raise their heads against the Omnipotent, as if they had dominion over Creation and not He! If they had any power, let them mount up to heaven and use all the means they have to that end, and see how they can frustrate Allah's Purpose!

11. But there - will be(4158) put to flight even a host of confederates.

4158 Of course they cannot frustrate Allah's Purpose. In that world—the spiritual world—they will be ignominiously routed, even if they form the strongest confederacy of the Powers of Evil that ever could combine. *Cf.* the last clause of verse 13 below.

12. Before them (were many who) rejected messengers,-(4159) the people of Noah, and ´Ad, and Pharaoh, the Lord of Stakes,(4160)

4159 In their day, Noah's contemporaries, or 'Ad and Thamud, so frequently mentioned, or Pharaoh the mighty king of Egypt, or the people to whom Lot was sent *(Cf.* 37:75-82; 7:65-79, 7:103-137, 7:80-84) were examples of arrogance and rebellion against Allah: they rejected the divine Message brought by their messengers, and they all came to an evil end. Will not their posterity learn their lesson?

4160 The title of Pharaoh, "Lord of the Stakes", denotes power and arrogance, in all or any of the following ways: (1) the stake makes a tent firm and stable, and is a symbol of firmness and stability; (2) many stakes mean a large camp and a numerous army to fight; (3) impaling with stakes was a cruel punishment resorted to by the Pharaohs in arrogant pride of power.

13. And Thamud, and the people of Lut, and the Companions(4161) of the Wood; - such were the Confederates.(4162)

4161 *Companions of the Wood:* see 15:78, and n. 2000.

4162 *Cf.* above **,** verse 11, and n. 4158.

14. Not one (of them) but rejected the messengers, but My punishment came justly and inevitably(4163) (on them).

4163 *Cf.* 15:64, n. 1990; and 22:18 .

15. These (today) only wait for a single mighty Blast,(4164) which (when it comes) will brook no delay.(4165)

4164 *Cf.* 36:29, n. 3973.

4165 *Fawaq.* delay, the interval between one milking of a she-camel, and another, either to give her a breathing space or to give her young time to suck—or perhaps the milker to adjust his fingers. Such an interval will be quite short. The derived meaning is that when the inevitable punishment for sin arrives, it will not tarry, but do its work without delay.

16. They say: "Our Lord! hasten to us our sentence(4166) (even) before the Day of Account!"

4166 *Cf.* 26:204 and n. 3230. Those who do not believe in the Hereafter say ironically: "Let us have our punishment and sentence now: why delay it?" The last verse and the next verse supply the commentary. As to those who mock, they will find out the truth soon enough, when it is too late for repentance or mercy. As to the prophets of Allah, who are mocked, they must wait patiently for Allah to fulfil His Plan: even men who had worldly strength and power, like David, had to exercise infinite patience when mocked by their contemporaries.

17. Have patience at what they say, and remember our servant David, the man of strength:(4167) for he ever turned (to Allah..

4167 David was a man of exceptional strength, for even as a raw youth, he slew the Philistine giant Goliath. See 2:249-252, and notes 286-287. Before that fight, he was mocked by his enemies and chidden even by his own elder brother. But he relied upon Allah, and won through, and afterwards became king.

18. It was We that made the hills declare,(4168) in unison with him, Our Praises, at eventide and at break of day,

4168 See n. 2733 to 21:79. All nature sings in unison and celebrates the praises of Allah. David was given the gift of music and psalmody, and therefore the hills and birds are expressed as singing Allah's praises in unison with him. The special hours when the hills and groves echo the songs of birds are in the evening and at dawn, when also the birds gather together, for those are respectively their roosting hours and the hours of their concerted flight for the day.

19. And the birds gathered (in assemblies): all with him did turn (to Allah).(4169)

4169 Note the mutual echo between this verse and verse 17 above. The Arabic *awwab* is common to both, and it furnishes the rhyme or rhythm of the greater part of this Surah, thus echoing the main theme: 'Turn to Allah in Prayer and Praise, for that is more than any worldly power or wisdom.'

20. We strengthened his kingdom, and gave him wisdom and sound judgment(4170) in speech and decision.

4170 *Cf. n.* 2732 to 21:79 for David's sound judgement in decisions; he could also express himself aptly, as his Psalms bear witness.

21. Has the Story of the Disputants reached thee?(4171) Behold, they climbed over the wall of the private chamber;

4171 This story or Parable is not found in the Bible, unless the vision here described be considered as equivalent to Nathan's parable in II Samuel, 11 and 12. Baydawi would seem to favour that view, but other Commentators reject it. David was a pious man, and he had a well-guarded private chamber *(mihrab)* for Prayer and Praise.

22. When they entered the presence of David,(4172) and he was terrified of them, they said: "Fear not: we are two disputants, one of whom has wronged the other: Decide now between us with truth, and treat us not with injustice, but guide us to the even Path..

4172 David was used to retiring to his private chamber at stated times for his devotions. One day, suddenly, his privacy was invaded by two men, who had obtained access by climbing over a wall. David was frightened at the apparition. But they said: "We have come to seek thy justice as king: we are brothers, and we have a quarrel, which we wish thee to decide."

23. "This man is my brother:(4173) He has nine and ninety ewes, and I have (but) one: Yet he says, ´commit her to my care,´ and is (moreover) harsh to me in speech."

4173 The brother who was most aggrieved said: "This my brother has a flock of ninety-nine sheep, and I have but one; yet he wants me to give up my one sheep to his keeping; and moreover he is not even fair-spoken. He talks like one meditating mischief, and he has not even the grace to ask as an equal, of one sharing in a business or inheritance. What shall I do?"

24. (David) said: "He has undoubtedly wronged thee(4174) in demanding thy (single) ewe to be added to his (flock of) ewes: truly many are the partners (in business)(4175) who wrong each other: Not so do those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and how few are they?"...and David gathered that We had tried him: he asked forgiveness of his Lord,(4176) fell down, bowing (in prostration), and turned (to Allah in repentance).(4176-A)

4174 The circumstances were mysterious, the accusation was novel; it was not clear why the unjust brother should also have come with the complainant, risking his life in climbing the wall to evade the guard, and he certainly said nothing. David took them literally, and began to preach about the falsehood and the fraud of men, who should be content with what they have, but who always covet more. (R).

4175 Especially, said David, is it wrong for brothers or men in partnership to take advantage of each other; but how few are the men who are righteous? He had in mind his own devotions and justice. But lo and behold! the men disappeared as mysteriously as they had come. It was then that David realised that his visions had been a trial or temptation-a test of his moral or spiritual fibre! Great though he was as a king, and just though he was as a judge, the moment that he thought of these things in self-pride, his merit vanished. In himself he was as other men; it was Allah's grace that gave him wisdom and justice, and he should have been humble in the sight of Allah.

4176 Judged by ordinary standards, David had done no wrong; he was a good and just king. Judged by the highest standard of those nearest to Allah *(Muqarrabun,* 56:11), the thought of self-pride and self-righteousness had to be washed off from him by his own act of self-realisation and repentance. This was freely accepted by Allah, as the next verse shows.

4176-A Some commentators say that David's fault here was his hastiness in judging before hearing the case of the other party. When he realised his lapse, he fell down in repentance. [Eds.].

25. So We forgave him this (lapse): he enjoyed, indeed, a Near Approach to Us, and a beautiful place of (Final) Return.

26. O David! We did indeed make thee a vicegerent(4177) on earth: so judge thou between men in truth (and justice): Nor follow thou the lusts (of thy heart), for they will mislead thee from the Path(4178) of Allah. for those who wander astray from the Path of Allah, is a Penalty Grievous, for that they forget the Day of Account.

4177 *Cf.* 2:30, and n. 47. David's kingly power, and the gifts of wisdom, justice, psalmody, and prophethood were bestowed on him as a trust. These great gifts were not to be a matter of self-glory.

4178 As stated in 4171 above, this vision and its moral are nowhere to be found in the Bible. Those who think they see a resemblance to the Parable of the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel, 12:1-17) have nothing to go upon but the mention of the "one ewe" here and the "one little ewe-lamb" in Nathan's Parable. The whole story is here different, and the whole atmosphere is different. The Biblical tide given to David, "a man after God's own heart" is refuted by the Bible itself in the scandalous tale of heinous crimes attributed to David in chapters 11 and 12 of 2 Samuel, *viz.,* adultery, fraudulent dealing with one of his own servants, and the contriving of his murder. Further, in chapter 13, we have the story of rapes, incest, and fratricide in David's own household! The fact is that passages like these are mere *chroniques scandakuses, i.e.,* narratives of scandalous crimes of the grossest character. The Muslim idea of David is that of a man just and upright, endowed with all the virtues, in whom even the least thought of self-elation has to be washed off by repentance and forgiveness.(R).

27. Not without purpose did We(4179) create heaven and earth and all between! that were the thought of Unbelievers! but woe to the Unbelievers because of the Fire (of Hell)!

4179 *Cf.* 3:191. Unbelief is the subjective negation of a belief in Order, Beauty, Purpose, and Eternal Life. Unbelief is to Faith as Chaos is to Cosmos, as the Fire of Misery is to the Garden of Bliss .

28. Shall We treat those who believe and work deeds(4180) of righteousness, the same as those who do mischief on earth? Shall We treat those who guard against evil, the same as those who turn aside from the right?

4180 The reference to the Hereafter at the end of verse 26 above is of a piece with the whole tenor of this Surah, which deals with the superiority of the spiritual kingdom and the Hereafter. If there were no Hereafter, how could you reconcile the inequalities of this world? Would not the Unbelievers be right in acting as if all Creation and all life were futile? But there is a Hereafter and Allah will not treat the Good and Evil alike. He is just and will fully restore the balance disturbed in this life.

29. (Here is) a Book which We have sent down unto thee, full of blessings,(4181) that they may mediate on its Signs, and that men of understanding may receive admonition.

4181 Revelation is not a mere chance or haphazard thing. It is a real blessing-among the greatest that Allah has bestowed on man. By meditation on it in an earnest spirit man may learn of himself, and his relation to nature around him and to Allah the Author of all. Men of understanding may, by its help, resolve all genuine doubts that there may be in their minds, and learn the true lessons of spiritual life.

30. To David We gave Solomon (for a son),-(4182) How excellent in Our service! Ever did he turn (to Us)!

4182 The greatest in this life have yet need of this spiritual blessing: without it all worldly good is futile. Referring back to the story of David, we are now introduced to Solomon, who was a great king but greater still because he served Allah and turned to Him. The Qur'an, unlike the Old Testament, represents Solomon as a righteous king, not as an idolater, doing "evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings, 11:6).

31. Behold, there were brought(4183) before him, at eventide coursers of the highest breeding,(4184) and swift of foot;

4183 The passages about David and Solomon have been variously interpreted by the Commentators. The versions which I have suggested have good authority behind them, though I have followed my own judgement in filling in the details.

4184 *Safinat* literally, horses that stand, when at ease, on three legs, firmly planted, with the hoof of the fourth leg resting lightly on the ground. This would imply breeding and a steady temper, to match with the quality of swiftness mentioned in the next clause.

32. And he said, "Truly do I love the love(4185) of Good, with a view to the glory of my Lord,"- until (the sun) was hidden in the veil (of Night):(4186)

4185 The story is not found in the Old Testament. I interpret it to mean that, like his father David, Solomon was also most meticulous in not allowing the least motive of self to be mixed up with his spiritual virtues. He was fond of horses: he had great armies and wealth; but he used them all in Allah's service. *Cf.* 27:19, n. 3259; 27:40, n. 3276, etc. His battles were not fought for lust of blood, but as Jihad in the cause of righteousness. His love of horses was not like that of a mere race-goer or of a warrior: there was a spiritual element in it. He loved by a kind of love which was spiritual—the love of the highest Good. Some commentators interpret this verse saying that Solomon, peace be upon him, was so engrossed in the inspection of his fine horses that he completely forgot to say his 'Asr prayer before the sunset. In the light of this interpretation the verse may be translated: "And he said, Truly did I prefer the good things (of this world) to the remembrance of my Lord". (R).

4186 His review of his fine horses was interrupted by his evening devotion, but he resumed it after his devotions.

33. "Bring them back to me." then began he to pass(4187) his hand over (their) legs and their necks.

4187 Like all lovers of horses, he patted them on their necks and passed his hand over their forelegs and was proud of having them—not as vanities but as a "lover of Good".

34. And We did try(4188) Solomon: We placed on his throne a body(4189) (without life); but he did turn (to Us in true devotion):

4188 What was the trial of Solomon? All the power, wealth, and glory, which were given to him were a spiritual trial to him. They might have turned another man's head, but he was staunch and true, and while he enjoyed and used all the power he had—over spirits, men, and the forces of nature, (see below), he kept his mind steady to the service of Allah *Cf.* 8:28, where "your possessions and your progeny" are declared to be "but a trial".

4189 *The body (without life) on his throne* has been variously interpreted. The interpretation that appeals to me most is that his earthly power, great as it was, was like a body without a soul, unless it was vivified by Allah's spirit. But Solomon did turn to Allah in true devotion, and his real power lay there. He did his best to root out idolatry, and he completed the Temple in Jerusalem for the worship of the One True God. *Cf.* his conversion of Bilqis the Queen of Sheba, 27:40, n. 3276. See also 7:148, where the same *word jasad* is used in connection with the image of a calf which the Israelites had set up for worship in the absence of Moses. Men may worship worldly Power as they may worship an idol, and there is great temptation in such Power, though Solomon withstood such temptation. I do not think that a reference to 34:14 (n. 3808) will fit the context here.

35. He said, "O my Lord! Forgive me,(4190) and grant me(4191) a kingdom which, (it may be), suits not another after me: for Thou art the Grantor(4192) of Bounties (without measure).

4190 The seeking of worldly Power, even if intended to be used for Allah's service, has a little of Self in it. It may be quite legitimate and even meritorious in ordinary men, but even the thought of it in a Prophet is to be apologised for. See a similar idea in the case of David explained in n. 4176 to 38:24 above.

4191 He asked for a Power that *he* would not misuse, though others might not be able to refrain from misusing it-such as power over forces of nature or forces of violence (see the next three verses).

4192 *Cf.* 38:9, above

36. Then We subjected the Wind(4193) to his power, to flow gently to his order, Whithersoever he willed,-

4193 *Cf.* 21:81. and n. 2736.

37. As also the evil ones,(4194) (including) every kind of builder and diver,-

4194 *Cf.* 21:82. and n. 2738. *Cf.* also 34:12-13 and notes there: in the latter passage the spirits mentioned are called Jinns. The divers were probably those employed in pearl fisheries.

38. As also others bound(4195) together in fetters.

4195 *Cf.* 14:49 . where the same expression "bound together in fetters" is applied to Sinners on the Day of judgement.

39. "Such are Our Bounties: whether thou bestow them(4196) (on others) or withhold them, no account will be asked."

4196 Allah bestowed such abundant powers and bounties on Solomon that they could not be counted or measured: and he was free to give away anything he liked or keep anything he liked. In this was great temptation for an ordinary man. Solomon as a prophet withstood it and asked to be forgiven for power and such a kingdom as others might not be able to use lawfully. His earthly kingdom went to pieces after his death. But his name and fame endure. And what is more, he obtained a place among the Nearest Ones to Allah. See next verse.

40. And he enjoyed, indeed,(4197) a Near Approach to Us, and a beautiful Place of (Final) Return.

4197 The same words are used of David in 38:25 above, thus symmetrically closing the argument about the two greatest kings in Israel .

41. Commemorate Our Servant Job.(4198) Behold he cried to his Lord: "The Evil One has afflicted me with distress(4199) and suffering!"

4198 For this passage, verses 41-44, *Cf.* 21:83-84.

4199 The distress was of many kinds, physical, mental, and spiritual. See n. 2739 to 21:83. He suffered from loathsome sores he lost his home, his possessions, and his family; and almost his balance of mind. But he did not lose Faith but turned to Allah (see verse 44 below), and the recuperative process began.

42. (The command was given:) "Strike with thy foot:(4200) here is (water) wherein to wash, cool and refreshing, and (water) to drink."

4200 The recuperative process having begun, he was commanded to strike the earth or a rock with his foot, and a fountain or fountains gushed forth—to give him a bath and clean his body, to refresh his spirits, and to give him drink and rest. This is a fresh touch, not mentioned in S. 21 or in the Book of Job, but adding beautifully to our realisation of the picture.

43. And We gave him (back) his people, and doubled their number,- as a Grace(4201) from Ourselves, and a thing for commemoration, for all who have Understanding.

4201 Cf. 21:84, and notes 2739-2740.

44. "And take in thy hand a little grass, and strike(4202) therewith: and break not (thy oath)." Truly We found him full of patience and constancy. How excellent in Our service!(4203) ever did he turn (to Us)!

4202 In his worst distress Job was patient and constant in faith, but apparently his wife was not. According to the book of Job (2:9-10), "Then said his wife unto him, dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die. But he said unto her, thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." He must have said in his haste to the woman that he would beat her: he is asked now to correct her with only a wisp of grass, to show that he was gentle and humble as well as patient and constant.

4203 *Cf.* 38:30 above, where similar words are spoken of Solomon. Patience and constancy are also a form of service, if our attitude is due to an *active* faidth in Allah, and not mere passivity. So Milton in his Sonnet: "They also serve who only stand and wait."

45. And commemorate Our Servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, possessors of Power and Vision.(4204)

4204 In the last Surah (37:83-113), Abraham and Isaac (and by implication Jacob) were mentioned as resisting Evil and winning through. Here they are mentioned as men with spiritual power and vision, Israelite patriarchs, who bore witness to the Gospel of the Hereafter, and were therefore a blessing to their people, for they taught the Truth.

46. Verily We did choose them for a special (purpose)- proclaiming the Message of the Hereafter.

47. They were, in Our sight, truly, of the company of the Elect and the Good.

48. And commemorate Isma´il,(4205) Elisha, and Zul-Kifl: Each of them was of the Company of the Good.

4205 Isma'il, the Patriarch of the Arab race, was also mentioned (37:101-107) as a pattern of self-sacrifice, now he is mentioned in the company of the Good, *i.e.,* of those who were a blessing to their people. Here he is bracketed with Elisha (for whom see n. 906 to 6:86), and Dhu al Kifl (for whom see n. 2743 to 21:85). All these three were examples of constancy and patience under suffering.

49. This is a Message (of admonition): and verily, for the Righteous,(4206) is a beautiful Place of (Final) Return,-

4206 Some of the pre-eminent examples of the Elect and the Good having been mentioned, we have now a reference to the Righteous as a body (rank and file as well as leaders) and their future in the Hereafter as won by victory over Evil.

50. Gardens of Eternity, whose doors will (ever) be open to them;(4207)

4207 The Final bliss will not be a hole-and-corner thing, a pale reflection of some Palace or Retreat, where mystery reigns behind closed doors. Its doors will be open, and its inmates will be free to go in and out as they will, because their wills will be purified and brought into accord with the Universal Law.

51. Therein will they recline (at ease): Therein can they call (at pleasure) for fruit in abundance,(4208) and (delicious) drink;

4208 See n. 4003 to 36:57. The free Gardens are types of satisfaction in external surroundings: the comfortable reclining thrones, the fruit and the drink are types of the soul's individual satisfaction; and the society of pure-minded companions, of equal ages, in the type of a soul's social satisfaction,

52. And beside them will be chaste women restraining(4209) their glances, (companions) of equal age.(4210)

4209 *Cf.* 37:48 and n. 4064, and 36:56, n. 4002. As we conceive happiness in this life, it is not complete if it is only solitary. How we hanker after some one who can share in our highest joy! That feeling is also figured here.

4210 To make the metaphor of social happiness complete, we want companionship of equal age. Age and youth cannot be happy together. It is not suggested that in the Timeless state figured here, there will be old age; but if it is possible to conceive of temperamental differences men, the company will be so arranged that it will be congenial. Or we can accept the type of youth and freshness as common to all in that happy state.

53. Such is the Promise made, to you for the Day of Account!

54. Truly such will be Our Bounty (to you); it will never fail;-

55. Yea, such! but - for the wrong-doers will be an evil place(4211) of (Final) Return!-

4211 This is in parallel contrast to the state of the Blessed in 38:49 above.

56. Hell!- they will burn therein, - an evil bed (indeed, to lie on)!-(4212)

4212 *Cf.* 14:29 . This continues the parallel contrast to the state of the Blessed already described.

57. Yea, such! - then shall they taste it,- a boiling fluid, and a fluid(4213) dark, murky, intensely cold!-

4213 *Cf.* 10:4, and n. 1390. The conjunction of the boiling fluid with the dark, murky, intensely cold fluid heightens the effect of the Penalty. In place of harmony, there is the discord of extreme opposites. And the discord is not confined to this. It runs through the whole idea of Hell. See the next verse.

58. And other Penalties of a similar kind, to match them!

59. Here is a troop rushing headlong with you!(4214) No welcome for them! truly, they shall burn in the Fire!

4214 The wonder is that so many people should embrace Evil, and in so much hurry and eagerness! Here they may be welcomed by the leaders of Evil, but in the final state it will be the opposite of welcome. They will be followed with reproaches and curses.

60. (The followers shall cry to the misleaders:) "Nay, ye (too)! No welcome for you! It is ye who have brought this upon us!(4215) Now evil is (this) place to stay in!"

4215 It is the nature of Evil to shift the blame to others. The followers will reproach the leaders, but none can escape personal responsibility for his own acts and deeds!

61. They will say: "Our Lord! whoever brought this upon us,- Add to him a double(4216) Penalty in the Fire!"

4216 *Cf.* 7:38 , and n. 1019. See also 11:20 . The evil ones now vent their spite on others. Here they ask for a double penalty for their misleaders, but they forget their own personal responsibility. In the next verse, they express their surprise that others have escaped the torments, which they themselves have earned.

62. And they will say: "What has happened to us that we see not men whom we used to number among the bad ones?(4217)

4217 *The bad ones: i.e.,* the ones whom they (evil ones) ridiculed as fools sure to come to an evil end, because they refused to join in with the evil ones in their plots. The values are now reversed. The good ones are among the Blessed, and are to be seen in the 'Bed of Misery'. The ridicule is now against the evil ones.

63. "Did we treat them (as such) in ridicule, or have (our) eyes failed to perceive them?"

64. Truly that is just and fitting,-(4218) the mutual recriminations of the People of the Fire!

4218 The mutual recriminations and spite are themselves a part of the Penalty, for such feelings increase their unhappiness.

65. Say: "Truly am I a Warner: no god is there but the one Allah, Supreme and Irresistible,-(4219)

4219 *Cf.* 12:39 , where Joseph preaches to the men in prison. The one supreme Message of importance to mankind was (and is) the Unity of Allah: that He is the Creator and Sustainer of all: that His Will is supreme: that He can carry out His Will without question, and no powers of Evil can defeat it; and that He forgives by His grace again and again. This Message the Prophet came to deliver, and he delivered it.

66. "The Lord of the heavens and the earth, and all between,- Exalted in Might, able to enforce His Will,(4220) forgiving again and again."(4221)

4220 In n. 2818 to 22:40, I have explained the full import of *'Aziz* as a title applied to Allah, and I have expressed two of the leading ideas involved, in the two lines here. The argument in this Surah turns upon the contrast between earthly Power and the Divine Power: the one is impotent and the other is supreme.

4221 *Ghaffar* is the emphatic intensive form, and I have accordingly translated it as "Forgiving again and again". *Cf.* 20:82.

67. Say: "That is a Message Supreme (above all),-

68. "From which ye do turn away!(4222)

4222 The Message which is of supreme import to mankind-from that they turn away. Instead of profiting by it, they turn away to side issues, or unprofitable speculation: such as: what is the origin of Evil; when will Judgement come? etc.

69. "No knowledge have I of the Chiefs on high, when they discuss (matters) among themselves.(4223)

4223 The hierarchy in Heaven, under Allah's command, discuss questions of high import in the Universe. Those are not necessarily revealed to men, except insofar as it is good for men to know, as in verses 71-85 below. But the chief thing for man is to know that Allah is Most Merciful, that He forgives again and again, and that Evil has no power over those who trust in Allah.

70. ´Only this has been revealed to me: that I am to give warning plainly and publicly."(4224)

4224 Two things are implied in *Mubin:* (1) that the warning should be clear and perspicuous; there should be no mincing of matters, no ambiguity, no compromise with evil, 7:184; (2) that the warning should be delivered publicly, before all people, in spite of opposition and persecution, 26:115. Both these ideas I have tried to express in this passage.

71. Behold, thy Lord said(4225) to the angels: "I am about to create man from clay:(4226)

4225 Two passages may be compared with this: *viz.* : (1) 2:30-39, where merely the first stages of the Rebellion against Allah and its consequences to mankind are mentioned, and (2) 15:29-40, where the further intrusion of evil in man's life here below is referred to, and an assurance is given that Evil will have no power except over those who yield to it. The latter is the passage most relevant here, as we are now dealing with the power of Revelation to defeat the machinations of Evil.

4226 This shows that the material world round us was created by Allah before Allah fashioned man and breathed of His soul into him. Geology also shows that man came on the scene at a very late stage in the history of this planet.

72. "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit,(4227) fall ye down in obeisance unto him."

4227 See n. 1968 to 15:29, where the spiritual significance of this is explained.

73. So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together:

74. Not so Iblis: he was haughty, and became(4228) one of those who reject Faith.

4228 Arrogance (self-love) is thus the root of Evil and of Unfaith.

75. ((Allah)) said: "O Iblis! What prevents thee from prostrating thyself to one whom I have created with My hands?(4229) Art thou haughty? Or art thou one(4230) of the high (and mighty) ones?"

4229 Man, as typified by Adam, is in himself nothing but frail clay. But as fashioned by Allah's creative power into something with Allah's spirit breathed into him, his dignity is raised above that of the highest creatures.

4230 If, then, Satan refuses, it is a rebellion against Allah. It arises from arrogance or haughtiness, an exaggerated idea of Self. Or, it is asked, are you really sufficiently high in rank to dispute with the Almighty? Of course he was not.

76. (Iblis) said: "I am better than he: thou createdst me from fire, and him thou createdst from clay."

77. ((Allah)) said: "Then get thee out from here: for thou art rejected, accursed.

78. "And My curse shall be on thee till the Day(4231) of Judgment."

4231 See n. 1972 to 15:35, where it is explained why the respite is to the Day of Judgement. The whole of that passage in S. 15 forms a good commentary on this.

79. (Iblis) said: "O my Lord! Give me then respite(4232) till the Day the (dead) are raised."

4232 For the significance of the respite see n. 1973 to 15:36.

80. (Allah) said: "Respite then is granted thee-

81. "Till the Day of the Time Appointed."(4233)

4233 It is not an indefinite respite. It is for a period definitely limited, while this our Probation lasts in this world. It is part of the test as to how we use our limited free will. After that, our whole existence will be on a different plane. The good will have been sorted out, the chain of consequences of the present world will be broken, and "a new Creation" will have taken the place of the present World.

82. (Iblis) said: "Then, by Thy Power,(4234) I will put them all in the wrong,-(4235)

4234 This phrase, this oath of Satan, is a fresh point introduced in this passage, because here we are dealing with Power—the Power of Good contrasted with Evil—the spiritual Power of Allah as contrasted with the power that we see in our earthly affairs. Satan acknowledges that even his power, such as it is, has no reality except insofar as it is permitted to operate by Allah in Allah's wise and universal Plan, and that it cannot harm the true and sincere worshippers of Allah.

4235 Seen. 1974 to 15:39.

83. "Except Thy Servants amongst them, sincere and purified (by Thy Grace)."

84. (Allah) said: "Then it is just and fitting-(4236) and I say what is just and fitting-

4236 *Cf.* n. 1990 to 15:64.

85. "That I will certainly fill(4237) Hell with thee and those that follow thee,- every one."

4237 *Cf.* 7:18 ; 7:179, and 11:119. n. 1623. The punishment of defiance, and rebellion is inevitable and just, and the followers who chose to identify themselves with the disobedience must suffer as well as the leaders. *Cf.* 10:33

86. Say: "No reward do I ask(4238) of you for this (Qur´an), nor am I a pretender.(4239)

4238 *Cf.* 25:57; 26:109; and many other passages. The prophet of Allah neither seeks nor expects any reward from men. On the contrary he suffers much at their hands. He is unselfish and offers his services under Allah's inspiration. He is satisfied with the hope "that each one who will may take a straight Path to his Lord." That is his reward. And the reward he hopes for from Allah is similarly unselfish. He earnestly hopes to win His Good Pleasure—or, to use another metaphor, "to see His Face."

4239 *Mutakallif:* a man who pretends to things that are not true, or declares as facts things that do not exist, one who takes upon himself tasks to which he is not equal. True prophets are not people of that kind.

87. "This is no less than a Message to (all)(4240) the Worlds.

4240 So far from there being any false or selfish motive in the Message proclaimed in Revelation, it is a healing mercy to all mankind. More, it is in accord with all parts of Allah's Creation, and makes us kin with all Creation, the handiwork of the One True God.

88. "And ye shall certainly know the truth of it (all)(4241) after a while."

4241 There may be many things which we in our "muddy vesture of decay" may not fully understand or take in. If we only follow the right Path, we shall arrive at the Goal in the Hereafter, and then everything will be clear to us.

39. Al Zumar (Crowds)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. **The revelation of this Book is from Allah,(4242) the Exalted in Power, full of Wisdom.**

4242 In connection with Revelation two qualities of Allah are mentioned: (1) that He is All-Powerful and can carry out His Will in spite of all opposition; and (2) that He is full of knowledge and wisdom. The first answers those who question how Allah can send Revelation to man; the second explains that true wisdom consists in carrying out Allah's Will as revealed to us.

2. **Verily it is We Who have revealed the Book to thee in Truth: so serve Allah, offering Him sincere devotion.**

3. **Is it not to Allah(4243) that sincere devotion is due? But those who take for protectors other than Allah (say): "We only serve them in order that they may bring us nearer(4244) to Allah." Truly Allah will judge between them in that wherein they differ.(4245) But Allah guides not such as are false and ungrateful.**

4243 In many Signs in Creation as described below, there yet is a clear indication of the unity of Plan, pointing to the Unity of the Creator. Worship of service is due to none but Him. And He wants exclusive and sincere devotion.

4244 Worshippers of Idols or of deities other than Allah, *e.g.,* saints or perhaps Wealth and Power, Science or Selfish Desire, may pretend that these are symbols that may get them nearer to their self-development, nearer to the goal of their life, nearer to Allah, but they are altogether on the wrong track.

4245 This departure of theirs from true worship, this divergence from the right way, produces endless disputations and sects. Allah will judge between them. But if they are determined to go after falsehoods and forget the gratitude and service which they owe to Allah, and Allah alone, they are putting themselves on a Path where they will get no guidance. They are cutting themselves off from revealed Truth.

4. **Had Allah wished to take to Himself a son, He could have chosen whom He pleased out of those whom He(4246) doth create: but Glory be to Him! (He is above such things.) He is Allah, the One, the Irresistible.**

4246 *(Cf.* 2:116). It is blasphemy to say that Allah begot a son. If that were true, He should have had a wife (6:101), and His son would have been of the same kind as Himself; whereas Allah is One, with no one else like unto Him (112:4). Begetting is an animal act which goes with sex. How can it be consistent with our conception of One who is above all Creatures? If such a blasphemous thought were possible, as that Allah wanted some one else to help Him, He could have chosen the best of His creatures instead of lowering Himself to an animal act. But glory to Allah! He is above such things! His Unity is the first thing that we have to learn about Him. As He is Omnipotent, He requires no creatures to help Him or bring other creatures to Him.

5. **He created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions):(4247) He makes the Night overlap the Day, and the Day overlap the Night: He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His law): Each one follows a course for a time appointed. Is not He the Exalted in Power - He Who forgives(4248) again and again?**

4247 *Cf.* 6:73, and n. 896.

4248 His Power is equalled by His Mercy. Who can there be like unto Him?

6. **He created you (all) from a single Person:(4249) then created, of like nature, his mate; and he sent down for you eight head(4250) of cattle in pairs: He makes you, in the wombs of your mothers, in stages, one after another,(4251) in three veils of darkness.(4252) such is Allah, your Lord and Cherisher: to Him belongs (all) dominion. There is no god but He: then how are ye turned away(4253) (from your true Centre)?**

4249 *Cf.* 4:1, and n. 504.

4250 See 6:143-144, where four kinds of cattle are mentioned in pairs in connection with certain Arab superstitions which are there condemned. Here the same four kinds are mentioned as representative of domesticated cattle given by Allah as useful to man. These are sheep, goats, camels, and oxen. In Arab idiom the horse is not included among "cattle".

For the wisdom and goodness of Allah in granting man dominion over cattle, see 36:71-73.

4251 See 22:5, where the gradual physical growth of man in several successive stages is mentioned as one of the Signs of Allah's creative Power and cherishing care.

4252 The three veils of darkness which cover the unborn child are: the caul or membrane, the womb, and the hollow in which the womb is enclosed. But we might understand "three" in a cumulative rather than a numerical sense.

4253 It is clear that you owe your very existence and your maintenance, growth, and preservation, to Allah; how is it that you are turned away by chance things from Him? (R).

7. **If ye reject (Allah), Truly Allah hath no need of you; but He liketh not(4254) ingratitude from His servants: if ye are grateful, He is pleased with you. No bearer of burdens(4255) can bear the burden of another. In the end, to your Lord is your Return, when He will tell you the truth of all that ye did (in this life). for He knoweth well all that is in (men´s) hearts.**

4254 Allah is independent of all wants, and therefore man's ingratitude does not affect Allah. But Allah cares for man, and therefore man's gratitude and service earn Allah's Good Pleasure, and man's ingratitude and rebellion are displeasing to Allah.

4255 *Cf.* 6:164. The account is between you and Allah. No one else can take your burdens or carry your sins. Vicarious atonement would be unjust. You have to return to Allah in the Hereafter. You will find that He knows all that you did in this life, and its full significance. He will explain to you even better than you can understand yourself, because all your secret hidden motives which you sometimes tried to ignore yourself, are fully known to Him.

8. **When some trouble toucheth man,(4256) he crieth unto his Lord, turning to Him in repentance: but when He bestoweth a favour upon him as from Himself, (man) doth forget what he cried and prayed for before, and he doth set up rivals unto Allah, thus misleading others from Allah.s Path. Say, "Enjoy thy blasphemy(4257) for a little while: verily thou art (one) of the Companions of the Fire!"**

4256 *Cf.* 10:12 . Trouble and adversity often bring a man to his bearings. But if he is not firm and constant, he forgets the lessons which life is meant to teach him. As soon as he gets a little prosperity, he forgets that it is from Allah, and attributes it to something which may only be a secondary cause, *e.g.,* his own efforts or the Powers of Nature, or something which he has invented and made into a god, *e.g.,* idols or fate. Allah is the Ultimate Cause of all things. To set up rivals to Him in this way is not only wrong and degrading to the false worshipper himself, but misleads countless ignorant people, who may not be able to make allowances for the figures of speech or the symbolism by which subtler minds can explain away falsehoods.

4257 Those who practise and those who teach evil and blasphemy may seem to flourish in this world. But their satisfaction will be of veiy short duration. They are treading all the while the Path that leads to the Fire of Perdition.

9. Is one who worships devoutly during the hour of the night(4258) prostrating himself or standing (in adoration), who takes heed of the Hereafter, and who places his hope in the Mercy of his Lord - (like one who does not)? Say: "Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition.(4259)

4258 *Cf.* 3:113-117. It is a great thing when a man gets into the attitude of humble devotion to Allah. To him the Hereafter is a real thing, and he prepares for it with good works. He does not build his hopes on the vanities of this world, but on Allah's Grace and Mercy. Such a man is "endued with understanding" and receives Allah's Message with fervour and alacrity. He is not to be compared with the cynic or the unbeliever, who knows nothing of the real value of the inner life.

4259 *Cf.* 13:19 .

10. Say: "O ye my servants who believe! Fear your Lord,(4260) good is (the reward) for those who do good in this world. Spacious is Allah's earth!(4261) those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure!"

4260 The "fear of Allah" (*Taqwa)* is explained in n. 26 to 2:2. See also n. 2912 to 23:60. The fear of Allah is akin to love, for it means that we are afraid to displease Him.

4261 *Cf.* 29:56 and n. 3489. We must always do right. We cannot plead that the circumstances in which we find ourselves force our hands. If our home conditions do not allow us to act according to the Faith that is in us, we must be prepared to suffer ostracism or even exile.

11. Say: "Verily, I am commanded to serve Allah with sincere devotion;

12. "And I am commanded to be the first(4262) of those who bow to Allah in Islam."

4262 *Cf.* 6:14 . "The first" need not necessarily be chronological: it may also refer to the first rank in zeal, and in readiness to suffer for the Cause.

13. Say: "I would, if I(4263) disobeyed my Lord, indeed have fear of the Penalty of a Mighty Day."

4263 *Cf.* 6:15 . The worst penalty in a spiritual sense is the Displeasure of Allah, just as the highest achievement, the fulfilment of all desire, is the attainment of Allah's Good Pleasure: 6:16 .

14. Say: "It is Allah I serve, with my sincere (and exclusive) devotion:

15. "Serve ye what ye will(4264) besides him." Say: "Truly, those in loss are those who lose their own souls and their People(4265) on the Day of Judgment: Ah! that is indeed the (real and) evident Loss!

4264 This is not a command or permission but a reproach and warning. The address of the Prophet of Allah may be paraphrased thus: 'Whatever happens I will follow the command of Allah. He has revealed Himself, and I know that He is One, supreme over all creatures. Him alone will I serve. Is there any so ignorant as to seek anyone else? Let him do so and see the results. The loss will be his own. For he falls from Grace into Evil.' (R).

4265 The cult of Evil results in the destruction of all that is best and most valuable in us, as well as poisons all the affections which link us to our families, and people, in the Final Adjustment, which we call the Day of Judgement.

16. They shall have Layers(4266) of Fire above them, and Layers (of Fire) below them: with this doth Allah warn off(4267) his servants: "O My Servants! then fear ye Me!"

4266 The consequences of Sin when Judgement comes are aptly figured by Layers upon Layers of Fire, which hem in the sinners above and below. It is also suggested that the Layers, though of Fire, have something dark in them—the scorching quality of Sin.

4267 But Allah does not leave mankind without warning. Man has been granted a limited amount of free will, and in order to help him in its right use, all the consequences of his action are clearly explained to him. To those who will listen to Reason are given arguments which can be apprehended by their own intelligence; to those who are swayed by affections and emotions, an appeal is made in the name of the Love of Allah; to those who understand nothing but fear, the warning is conveyed by a portrayal of the dreadful consequences of wrongdoing,

17. Those who eschew Evil,- and fall not into(4268) its worship,- and turn to Allah (in repentance),- for them is Good News: so announce the Good News to My Servants,-

4268 There is always the danger that Evil may seize us even if we approach it out of mere curiosity. If we take an interest in it we may become its worshippers or slaves. The wise man eschews it altogether, and so he enrols among the Servants of Allah, and gets the good news of His Mercy and Good Pleasure.

18. Those who listen to the Word, and follow the best (meaning) in it:(4269) those are the ones whom Allah has guided, and those are the ones endued with understanding.

4269 The Commentators construe this clause in two alternative ways. {1) If "word" be taken as any word, the clause would mean that good men listen to all that is said and choose the best of it. (2) If "word" be taken to mean Allah's Word, it would mean that they should listen reverently to it, and where permissive and alternative courses are allowed for those who are not strong enough to follow the higher course, those "endued with understanding" should prefer to attempt the higher course of conduct. For example, it is permitted (within limits) to punish those who wrong us, but the nobler course is to repel evil with good (23:96), we should try to follow the nobler course. I prefer the latter construction: it accords better with my interpretation of the last verse: see n. 4268.

19. Is, then, one against whom the decree of Punishment is justly due (equal to one who eschews Evil)?(4270) Wouldst thou, then, deliver one (who is) in the Fire?

4270 If a man is already steeped in sin and has rejected Allah's Grace, how can we expect Revelation to work in his soul?

20. But it is for those who fear their Lord. That lofty mansions,(4271) one above another, have been built: beneath them flow rivers (of delight): (such is) the Promise of Allah. never doth Allah fail in (His) promise.(4272)

4271 *Cf.* 29:58, and 34:37. The idea of heaven here is that of a Home of sublimity and beauty, with a picturesque outlook, such as we would describe in this life by the type of a palace by gently-flowing streams. The mansions will also suggest generous space and architectural beauty, tiers upon tiers piled one upon another.

4272 *Mi 'ad:* the time, place and manner of the fulfilment of a Promise. Allah's promise will be fulfilled in all particulars better than we can possibly imagine.

21. Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and leads it through springs in the earth?(4273) Then He causes to grow, therewith, produce of various colours: then it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then He makes it dry up and crumble away. Truly, in this, is a Message of remembrance to men of understanding.

4273 The circuit of water, by which the rain falls from the clouds, is absorbed through the earth, and flows through rivers or underground streams to the sea, where it again rises as vapour and forms clouds, was explained in notes 311-312 to 25:53. Here our attention is drawn to one portion of the process. The rain fructifies the soil and the seeds. Produce of various kinds is raised. The harvest ripens and is gathered in. The plants wither, dry up, and crumble away. Men and animals are fed. And the circuit starts again in another season.

22. Is one whose heart Allah has opened to Islam,(4274) so that he has received Enlightenment from Allah, (no better than one hard-hearted)? Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against celebrating(4275) the

praises of Allah. they are manifestly wandering (in error)!

<u>4274</u> Those who listen to Allah's Message find at each stage Allah's Grace helping them more and more to expand their spiritual understanding and to receive Allah's light, so that they travel farther and farther to their Goal in the Path of Truth and Righteousness. They are not to be compared to those who shut out Allah's Light from their hearts. See next note.

<u>4275</u> Just as there is spiritual progress for those who seek Allah, so there is more and more spiritual retrogression for those who close their hearts to Allah. Their hearts get hardened, and they allow less and less Allah's Grace to penetrate within. But it is obvious that they flounder on the Way, and cannot walk with the firm steps of those of assured Faith.

23. **Allah has revealed (from time to time) the most beautiful Message in the form of a Book, consistent with itself,(4276) (yet) repeating (its teaching in various aspects):(4277) the skins of those who fear their Lord tremble(4278) thereat; then their skins and their hearts do soften to the celebration of Allah's praises. Such is the guidance of Allah. He guides therewith whom He pleases,(4279) but such as Allah leaves to stray, can have none to guide.**

<u>4276</u> Is *Mutashabih* here to be understood in the same sense as in 3:7? See n. 347. The better opinion is that there is a slightly different shade of meaning here, as suggested by the context. In the earlier passages, it was opposed to *Muhkam:* here it is contrasted or compared to *Mathani* The root meaning is: 'having something similar; working by analogy or allegory, or parable; having its parts consistent with each other'. The last meaning I adopt here. The Qur'an was revealed in parts at different times. And yet its parts all conform to each other. There is no contradiction or inconsistency anywhere. (R).

<u>4277</u> *Mathani: Cf.* 15:87, where we have translated "oft-repeated": "The seven *oft-repeated* (verses)". See n. 2008 to that passage. Here the meaning is similar, but the context gives a different colour to it, as is seen in the translation.

<u>4278</u> The skin is the outer integument of the body. It receives the first shock from the impact of anything unusual, and it trembles and its hair stands on end under excitement. So in spiritual matters the first stimulation from Allah's Message is external. Those who receive Faith do it as it were with tremor and not with apathy. But the next stage is that it penetrates their outer nature and goes right into their hearts. Their whole nature is "softened" to receive the beneficent Message, and it transforms them through and through.

<u>4279</u> "Whom He pleases" and "leaves to stray" are explained fully in n. 2133 to 16:93. See also 14:4 and n. 1875,

24. **Is, then, one who has to fear the brunt of the Penalty on the Day of Judgment (and receive it) on his face,(4280) (like one guarded therefrom)? It will be said to the wrong- doers: "Taste ye (the fruits of) what ye earned!"(4281)**

<u>4280</u> The unrepentant Sinners will receive the full Penalty on the Day of Judgement. They will receive it full in the face, *i.e.,* their whole being will be affected by it. Their hands (figuratively) will be tied, and they cannot therefore use their hands to ward off the Penalty of the Fire: in any case their hands will not have the power to ward it off. Are such helpless people to be compared for a moment with people who have received Grace and are therefore guarded from all harm and danger? Certainly not. To the evil the fruit of their deed, and to the good the grace of their Lord!

<u>4281</u> That is, of all their misdeeds, all the evil which they did in the world.

25. **Those before them (also) rejected (revelation), and so the Punishment came to them from directions they did not perceive.(4282)**

<u>4282</u> *Cf.* 16:26 . They will be punished from quarters or in ways they do not perceive. From their Unbelief and Rebellion they think they derive great advantages, but they suddenly find out, when too late, that that which they exulted in was the cause of their undoing.

26. **So Allah gave them a taste of humiliation in the present life,(4283) but greater is the punishment of the Hereafter, if they only knew!**

<u>4283</u> *Cf. 2:114.* Sin often brings disgrace and humiliation in this life, but the greater and truer punishment is in the Hereafter. But men often do not know the inwardness of this matter. If they flourish here for a time, they think they will escape the real consequences in the Hereafter. Or if they suffer little harm here, they think that will make up the Penalty, and they will escape the Hereafter. Both ideas are wrong.

27. **We have put forth for men, in this Qur´an every kind of Parable,(4284) in order that they may receive admonition.**

<u>4284</u> Men can only understand high spiritual truths by parables and similitudes and these are given abundantly in the Qur'an. The object is, not merely to tell stories, but to teach lessons of spiritual wisdom.

28. **(It is) a Qur´an in Arabic,(4285) without any crookedness (therein):(4286) in order that they may guard against Evil.**

<u>4285</u> Previous revelations had been in other languages. Now the revelation was given in Arabia in Arabic itself, the language of the country which all could understand. And it is a beautiful language, straight and flexible, and fit to be the vehicle of sublime truths. *Cf.* C. 12.

<u>4286</u> See 18:1 and n. 2326. *Cf.* also 7:45 , n. 1024; and 19:36 , n. 2488.

29. **Allah puts forth a Parable a man belonging to many(4287) partners at variance with each other, and a man belonging entirely to one master: are those two equal in comparison? Praise be to Allah!(4288) But most of them have no knowledge.**

<u>4287</u> The difference between the creed of Polytheism and the Gospel of Unity is explained by the analogy of two men. One belongs to many masters; the masters disagree among themselves, and the poor man of many masters has to suffer from the quarrel of his many masters: it is an impossible and unnatural position. The other serves only one master, his master is good, and does all he can for his servant; the servant can concentrate his attention on his service; he is happy himself and his service is efficiendy performed. Can there be any doubt as to (1) which of them is the happier, and (2) which of them is in a more natural position? No man can serve two, still less, numerous masters.

<u>4288</u> Allah is praised that He has put us, not under gods many and lords many, but has, out of His infinite Mercy, allowed us direct approach to Him, the One, the True, the Eternal.

30. **Truly thou wilt die(4289) (one day), and truly they (too) will die (one day).**

<u>4289</u> Even the prophets are not exempt from bodily death, much less the righteous, but they live in their beneficent work and the memories they leave behind them. All men have to die, good and alike. But there is a life after death, and in that life all the unexplained things about which people dispute in this world will be made clear in the presence of Allah.

31. **In the end will ye (all), on the Day of Judgment, settle your disputes(4290) in the presence of your Lord.**

<u>4290</u> See last note.

32. **Who, then, doth more wrong than one who utters a lie concerning Allah,(4291) and rejects the Truth when it comes to him; is there not in Hell(4292) an abode for blasphemers?**

<u>4291</u> When the creature deliberately adopts and utters falsehoods against his own Creator, in spite of the Truth being brought, as it were, to his very door by Allah's Signs, what offence can we imagine more heinous than this? In Christian theology this is the blasphemy "against the Holy Ghost" spoken of in Matt. xii. 31-32: "whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man", (Christ), "it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come".

<u>4292</u> *Cf.* 3:151; 16:29 [Eds.].

33. **And he who brings the Truth and he who confirms(4293) (and supports) it - such are the men who do right.**

4293 This is true of the Prophet, and all men of God and all righteous persons. Anyone who preaches the Truth and brings home Allah's Signs to men is performing the duty of a right and noble life. In this he confirms the teaching of all previous men of God. Anyone who supports and confirms such a teacher is also doing his duty and on the right way. (R).

34. They shall have all that they wish for,(4294) in the presence of their Lord: such is the reward of those who do good:

4294 At that stage their wills will have been purified, and they could wish for nothing that they could not or should not have. And it will be as "in the presence of their Lord". If an earthly king gives a decoration, how much greater is the honour when the investiture takes place by the king himself personally?

35. So that Allah will turn off from them (even) the worst in their deeds(4295) and give them their reward according to the best of what they have done.

4295 The conjunction (Lam in Arabic, translated "so that") indicates here the results, not the purpose. Allah's Reward is so bounteous, that if we truly and sincerely put our will into His keeping, He will remove the consequences not only of our minor faults but of the worst of our sins, and judge us according to the very best of our deeds.

36. Is not Allah enough(4296) for his Servant? But they try to frighten thee with other (gods) besides Him! for such as Allah leaves to stray, there can be no guide.

4296 The righteous man will find Allah enough for all the protection he needs, all the rest and peace he craves for, and all the happiness he can imagine. If the evil ones wish to frighten him with false gods, he knows that that is mere superstition. In the case of idols to whom worship is paid, this is easily intelligible. But there are other false gods which men worship—wealth, power, science, selfish desire, and so on. The idea may occur to them: "this is the right course, but what will men say?" or "shall I lose my case if I tell the truth?" or "will it ruin my chances if I denounce sin in high places?" All such false gods will only mislead and leave their victims in the lurch. The worship of them will lose them the Grace of Allah, which wants to guide and comfort all who seek Allah.

37. And such as Allah doth(4297) guide there can be none to lead astray. Is not Allah Exalted in Power, (Able to enforce His Will), Lord of Retribution?(4298)

4297 On the other hand if anyone holds fast to Allah's Truth, nothing can mislead or betray him.

4298 Allah's Power can protect, and will defeat all plots against His Will, as well as punish Evil when it gets beyond bounds.

38. If indeed thou ask them who it is that created(4299) the heavens and the earth, they would be sure to say, "(Allah)". Say: "See ye then? the things that ye invoke besides Allah,- can they, if Allah wills some Penalty for me, remove His Penalty?- Or if He wills some Grace for me, can they keep back(4300) his Grace?" Say: "Sufficient is Allah for me! In Him trust those who put their trust."(4301)

4299 *Cf.* 29:61; also n. 2927 to 23:85. Most worshippers of false gods are neither atheists nor sceptics. They admit the existence of Allah as an abstract proposition, but it has not come into their hearts and souls: it has not been translated into their lives. They run after false worship on account of ancestral custom or on account of their thoughtlessness or false environment, or on account of their own selfish desires or limited outlook. To them is addressed the argument: 'Ultimately your false gods can do nothing for you: why not turn to the One True God, on Whom you depend, and Who can give you Grace and Mercy, Justice and Punishment?'

4300 *Cf.* 33:17.

4301 *Cf.* 12:67, and 14:12 . Allah alone is He Who will and can discharge any trust put in Him. All other things will fail. Therefore those who put their trust in anything should put their trust in Allah.

39. Say: "O my People! Do whatever ye can: I will do (my part):(4302) but soon will ye know-

4302 *Cf.* 11:121 and n. 1624-A.

40. "Who it is to whom comes a Penalty(4303) of ignominy, and on whom descends a Penalty that abides."

4303 *Cf.* 11:93. The two clauses, about those who suffer a Penalty of ignominy and those on whom descends a lasting Penalty, apparently refer to the same person in two different aspects: (1) they suffer shame, and (2) their punishment endures.

41. Verily We have revealed the Book to thee in Truth, for (instructing) Mankind.(4304) He, then, that receives guidance benefits his own soul: but he that strays injures his own soul. Nor art thou set(4305) over them to dispose of their affairs.

4304 Revelation is sent by Allah through His messenger, but it is for all. It is given in order that men and women may be taught Righteousness. It is given in Truth: there is no pretence about it. It is for their own good. If they reject it and follow Evil, the loss is their own.

4305 Allah's messengers do all they can to teach mankind. But they cannot force men's wills. If men reject their teaching, the account of the rejecters is with Allah. *Cf.* 6:107, and n. 935.

42. It is Allah that takes the souls (of men) at death;(4306) and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep:(4307) those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back(4308) (from returning to life), but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed verily in this are Signs(4309) for those who reflect.

4306 The mystery of life and death, sleep and dreams, is a fascinating enigma, of which the solution is perhaps beyond the ken of man. A vast mass of superstition as well as imaginative and psychological literature has grown up about it. But the simplest and truest religious doctrine is laid down here in a few words. In death we surrender our physical life, but our soul does not die; it goes back to a plane of existence in which it is more conscious of the realities of the spiritual world: "Allah takes the soul".

4307 *Cf.* 6:60. What is sleep? As far as animal life is concerned, it is the cessation of the working of the nervous system, though other animal functions, such as digestion, growth, and the circulation of the blood, continue, possibly at a different pace. It is the repose of the nervous system, and in this respect it is common to man and animals, and perhaps even to plants, if, as is probable, plants have a nervous system. The mental processes (and certainly volition) are also suspended in sleep, except that in ordinary dreams there is a medley of recollections, which often present vividly to our consciousness things that do not or cannot happen in nature as we know it in our coordinated minds. But there is another kind of dream which is rarer-one in which the dreamer sees things as they actually happen, backwards or forwards in time, or in which gifted individuals see spiritual truths otherwise imperceptible to them. How can we explain this? It is suggested that our soul or personality-that something which is above our animal life-is then in a plane of spiritual existence akin to physical death (see last note), when we are nearer to Allah. In poetic imagery, Sleep is "twin-brother to Death".

4308 Sleep being twin-brother to Death, our souls are for the time being released from the bondage of the flesh. Allah takes them for the time being. If, as some do, we are to die peacefully in sleep, our soul does not come back to the physical body, and the latter decays and dies. If we still have some period of life to fulfil according to Allah's decree, our soul comes back to the body, and we resume our functions in this life.

4309 If we contemplate these things, we can see more clearly many spiritual truths: *e.g.* (1) that our bodily life and death are not the whole story of our existence; (2) that in our bodily life we may be dead to the spiritual world, and in our bodily death, may be our awakening to the spiritual world; (3) that our nighdy Sleep, besides performing the function of rest to our physical life, gives us a foretaste of what we call death, which does not end our personality; and (4) that the Resurrection is not more wonderful than our daily rising from Sleep, "twin-brother to Death".

43. What! Do they take for intercessors others(4310) besides Allah. Say: "Even if they have no power whatever and no intelligence?"

4310 Let alone worship, men should not rely upon any power or person other than Allah to help them out or intercede for them. When it is idols, they are poor lifeless things which have obviously neither power nor intelligence. But even

prophets or saints or heroes have no power to intercede except as Allah wills and permits. See next note.

44. Say: "To Allah belongs exclusively (the right to grant) intercession:(4311) to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: In the End, it is to Him(4312) that ye shall be brought back."

4311 For *Shafa'ah* (Intercession, Advocacy) see 2:255; 10:3; 20:109, n. 2634; and 21:28 , n. 2688. It follows that no one can intercede with Allah, except (1) by Allah's permission, and (2) for those who have prepared themselves by penitence for Allah's acceptance. Even in earthly Courts, Advocacy is not permitted to anyone; the Advocate must be granted the position of Advocate before he can plead before the judge. Nor can it be supposed that a plea for forgiveness or mercy can be put forward except on grounds recognised by equity and justice.

4312 At all times, including our present life, all dominion belongs to Allah, At the End of the present plane of existence, we shall be placed before Allah for Judgement. *Cf.* 10:4.

45. When Allah, the One and Only, is mentioned, the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter are filled with disgust and horror;(4313) but when (gods) other than He are mentioned, behold, they are filled with joy!

4313 To evil ones, the mention of the exclusive service of Good is hateful: they only rejoice when other motives are added, e.g., personal indulgence, ancestral custom, and numerous things in life which compete with Allah's Law in this world (*Cf.* 40:12).

46. Say: "O Allah. Creator of the heavens and the earth! Knower of all that is hidden and open!(4314) it is Thou that wilt judge between Thy Servants in those matters about which they have differed."

4314 The mysteries of life and death, of worship and spiritual growth, are matters of high moment, which it may be difficult for us to apprehend in this present life. It is no use arguing about them and plunging in endless controversies. The proper attitude is to appeal to Allah humbly to accept our purified hearts and Faith, in the firm hope that everything which is now vague to us will be cleared up in the Hereafter, and to pray to Him for His guidance and mercy.

47. Even if the wrong-doers had all that there is on earth, and as much more,(4315) (in vain) would they offer it for ransom from the pain of the Penalty on the Day of Judgment: but something will confront them from Allah, which they could never have counted upon!(4316)

4315 *Cf.* 13:18 . Those who reject Allah's Message must realise that the time will come when they will wish they had sacrificed everything in the cause of Truth and Righteousness. It will be too late then. Why not examine the matter seriously now and accept Allah's Grace and Light?

4316 This something will be beyond anything they can conceive of in this life. Just as the righteous will then attain a bliss which no human imagination can conceive of now, so the unrighteous will be in a misery of which they can form no conception now. See next note.

48. For the evils of their Deeds will confront them, and they will be (completely)(4317) encircled by that which they used to mock at!

4317 How humiliating it will be for them to realise that the things they used to mock at are realities all around them, and the things they were so eager to pursue are mere falsehoods or vanities!

49. Now, when trouble touches man, he cries to Us:(4318) But when We bestow a favour upon him(4319) as from Ourselves, he says, "This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge (I have)!"(4320) Nay, but this is but a trial, but most of them understand not!

4318 *Cf.* 30:33 and n. 3545.

4319 *Cf.* 39:8 above.

4320 *Cf.* 28:78, and n. 3408. Prosperity may be a trial as much as adversity.

50. Thus did the (generations) before them say! But all that they did was of no profit to them.

51. Nay, the evil results of their Deeds overtook them.(4321) And the wrong-doers of this (generation)- the evil results of their Deeds will soon overtake them (too),(4322) and they will never be able to frustrate (Our Plan)!

4321 *Cf.* 16:34 .

4322 It is the same story through the ages. People laugh at Truth, persecute Truth, and try to destroy Truth. But Allah's Plan is never to be frustrated. It will be carried out, and only the enemies of Truth will accomplish their own undoing. So it happened in Arabia : so will it happen always and everywhere.

52. Know they not that Allah enlarges the provision(4323) or restricts it, for any He pleases? Verily, in this are Signs for those who believe!

4323 *Cf.* 28:82. Allah's gifts are given to all men—to some in a greater degree than to others. But it is all done according to His wise Plan, for His Will is just and looks to the good of all creatures, No one should therefore be puffed up in prosperity or cast down in adversity. Prosperity does not necessarily mean merit on man's part, nor adversity the reverse. Thinking men bear in mind the large Plan—which is visible in all Allah's Signs.

53. Say: "O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah. for Allah forgives(4324) all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

4324 *Forgives all sins: i.e.,* on sincere repentance and amendment of conduct.

54. "Turn ye to our Lord (in repentance) and bow to His (Will), before(4325) the Penalty comes on you: after that ye shall not be helped.

4325 The exhortation in brief is: 'Repent and work righteousness, before it becomes too late'. No help will come to you when the Judgement is actually established and you stand before the Judgement Seat.

55. "And follow the Best(4326) of (the courses) revealed to you from your Lord, before the Penalty comes on you - of a sudden while ye perceive not!-

4326 *Cf.* 39:18, and n. 4269. Allah's Command meets the weakness of His weakest servants, and only asks that His servants should surrender their selfish will to Allah's Will. In divine compassion, therefore, we are allowed to do just what we can, even though our standard should fall short of the highest standard, and Allah's Grace will come to our assistance. But we must do so in this life—and at once, as soon as the Word penetrates our mind or understanding. We must not delay a moment, for the Judgement may come at any time, suddenly, before we even perceive where we are.

56. "Lest the soul should (then) say: ´Ah! Woe is me!-(4327) In that I neglected (my duty) towards Allah, and was but among those who mocked!´-

4327 Many kinds of sighs and regrets will then assail us. In the first place, we shall see our shortcomings: we were negligent when we should have been serious: we mocked when we should have tried to learn and understand. But it will be too late then to retrieve our position.

57. "Or (lest) it should say:(4328) ´If only Allah had guided me, I should certainly have been among the righteous!´-

4328 In the second place, we might be inclined to say, 'I wish I had received warning or guidance'. But this would not be true, because the warning and guidance are being conveyed in the clearest manner in Allah's Revelation. That is the force of 'lest it should say'. It could have said so, had it not seen that the objection is clearly anticipated in the call to repent and in the warning about the Hereafter.

58. "Or (lest) it should say(4329) when it (actually) sees the penalty: ´If only I had another chance, I should certainly be among those who do good!´

4329 In the third place, when we stand face to face with the Penalty of our own deeds, we might say, 'I wish I had another chance'. But not one, but many, chances are being given, especially when we are told (verse 53 above): 'Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful'. The force of 'lest it should say' here is the same as explained in the last note.

59. "(The reply will be:) ´Nay,(4330) but there came to thee my Signs, and thou didst reject them: thou wast Haughty, and became one of those who reject faith!´"(4331)

4330 The reply explains how all such pleas have been anticipated and met. It was deliberate rejection that will deserve and meet its consequences. It is further explained that the motive of sin, as with Satan, was haughtiness and Self. (R).

4331 *Cf.* 2:34 . The example of the arch-sinner illustrates what happens, to a minor degree, to every kind of sinner.

60. On the Day of Judgment wilt thou see those who told lies against Allah.- their faces will be turned black;(4332) Is there not in Hell an abode(4333) for the Haughty?

4332 As spotless white is the symbol of purity, honour and truth, so black is the symbol of evil, disgrace, and falsehood. Perhaps "black" in connection with Hell also refers to *the* scorching punishment of the Fire.

4333 *Cf.* above, 39:32, and n. 4292, where the subtle implication of the interrogative form is explained.

61. But Allah will deliver the righteous to their place(4334) of salvation: no evil shall touch them, nor shall they grieve.

4334 *Mafazah* place or state of safety or salvation, place or state of victory or achievement; accomplishment of wish or desire. This is contrasted against the frustration, failure, and perdition of the children of evil-what may be called damnation in theological phraseology.

62. Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the Guardian and Disposer(4334) of all affairs.

4334 *Mafazah* place or state of safety or salvation, place or state of victory or achievement; accomplishment of wish or desire. This is contrasted against the frustration, failure, and perdition of the children of evil-what may be called damnation in theological phraseology.

63. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth: and those who reject the Signs of Allah,- it is they who will(4336) be in loss.

4336 Allah has nothing to lose by the rebellion or disobedience of His creatures. It is they who lose, because they go counter to their own nature, the beautiful mould in which Allah created them.

64. Say: "Is it some one other than Allah that ye order me(4337) to worship, O ye ignorant ones?"

4337 *Order me.* there is great irony here. The Prophet of Allah turns to his critics and says: 'You arrogate to yourselves the right to *order me.* how to worship! But who are you? You are only ignorant men! My commission is from Allah. It is the same as came to Prophets of Allah before me in all ages, *viz.,* (1) that the only Truth is in the Gospel of Unity; and (2) that if you worship other things and turn away from Allah, your life will be wasted and all your probation will have been of no account. (R).

65. But it has already been revealed to thee,-(4338) as it was to those before thee,- "If thou wert to join (gods with Allah., truly fruitless(4339) will be thy work (in life), and thou wilt surely be in the ranks of those who lose (all spiritual good)".

4338 The Message of Unity, renewed in Islam, has been the Message of Allah since the world began.

4339 *Cf.* 5:5. False worship means that we run alter fruitless tilings, and the main purpose of our spiritual lives is lost.

66. Nay, but worship Allah, and be of those who give thanks.(4340)

4340 To "give thanks" is to show by our conduct that we esteem the gifts of Allah and will use them in His service.

67. No just estimate have they made of Allah,(4341) such as is due to Him: On the Day of Judgment the whole of the earth will be but His handful,(4342) and the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand: Glory to Him! High is He above the Partners they attribute to Him!

4341 *Cf.* 6:91, and n. 909; and 22:74. In running after false gods or the powers of nature they have forgotten that all creatures are as nothing before Allah.

4342 See last note. The whole earth will be no more to Allah than a thing that a man might enclose in the hollow of his hand, nor will the heavens with their vast expanse be more than a scroll, which a man might roll up with his right hand, the hand of power and action. *Cf.* 21:104, and 81:1. (R).

68. The Trumpet will (just) be sounded, when all that are in the heavens and on earth will swoon,(4343) except such as it will please Allah (to exempt). Then will a second one be sounded, when, behold, they will be standing and looking on!

4343 *Sa'iqa* implies the idea of a swoon, or loss of all consciousness of being; it implies a cessation of the normal functioning of the usual powers of life or feeling. With the first Trumpet of the Resurrection, the whole world will cease to be in the form and the relations which we see now: there will be a new heaven and a new earth, see 14:48, n. 1925; human souls will for the time being be dazed and lose all memory or consciousness of time or place or personality. With the second one, they will stand in a new world; they will see with clearer vision than ever before; and judgement will proceed. (R).

69. And the Earth will shine with the Glory of its Lord:(4344) the Record (of Deeds) will be placed (open); the prophets and the witnesses will be brought forward and a just decision(4345) pronounced between them; and they will not be wronged (in the least).

4344 It will be a new Earth. All traces of injustice or inequality, darkness or evil, will have gone. There will be the one universal Light, the Glory of Allah, which will now illuminate all. Falsehood, pretence, and illusion will have disappeared. Everything will be seen in its true light.

4345 It is in such a scene of Reality that Judgement will be held. Before the Throne of Allah, the book of each man's deeds and motives will be placed wide open, which all may see; the Prophets and Preachers of Truth and the martyrs who gave their lives or made their real sacrifices in the cause of Truth, will be in the Court, to give evidence; and the decision pronounced will be absolutely just, for the Judge will not only be just, but He will know every fact and circumstance, and His wisdom will give due weight to everything, great or small. (R).

70. And to every soul will be paid in full (the fruit) of its Deeds; and (Allah) knoweth best all that(4346) they do.

4346 In an earthly court, a decision may possibly go wrong because the judge is deceived; here no deceit or mistake will be possible, for Allah knows all, and knows it better than anyone else can. (R).

71. The Unbelievers will be led to Hell in crowd:(4347) until, when they arrive, there, its gates will be opened. And its keepers will say,(4348) "Did not messengers come to you from among yourselves, rehearsing to you the Signs of your Lord, and warning you of the Meeting of This Day of yours?" The answer will be: "True: but the Decree of Punishment has been proved true(4349) against the Unbelievers!"

4347 *Crowds:* this is the word which gives the keynote to the Surah. If the soul does not stand to its own convictions or search out the Truth by itself, it will be classed with the crowds that go to Perdition!

4348 The Keepers may be supposed to be angels, who know nothing of the conditions of evil on this earth, and are surprised at such crowds coming to the "Evil Abode" *(Cf.* 40:49). (R).

4349 *Cf.* 10:33 . The answer is perhaps given by other angels: 'yes; messengers were sent to them from among themselves, to warn them and proclaim to them Mercy through repentance; but the decree of Allah, which warned them of punishment, has now come true against them, for they rebelled and were haughty; they rejected Truth, Faith, and Mercy!' (*Cf.* 67:6-11).

72. (To them) will be said: "Enter ye the gates of Hell, to dwell therein: and evil is (this) Abode of the Arrogant!"(4350)

4350 As elsewhere, the root of Evil is pointed out to be in self-love and arrogance. *Cf.* 2:34 , etc.

73. And those who feared their Lord will be led to the Garden in crowds:(4351) until behold, they arrive there; its gates will be opened; and its keepers will say: "Peace be upon you! well have ye done!(4352) enter ye here, to dwell therein."

4351 The righteous ones will also go in crowds, and not be alone. There is now a true sorting out. Verses 73-75 are parallel in contrast to verses 71-72 above.

4352 The angels in heaven are not surprised at the advent of the good and righteous souls. They are glad; they greet them with the salutation of Peace; they congratulate them; and they welcome them in.

74. They will say: "Praise be(4353) to Allah, Who has truly fulfilled His Promise to us, and has given us (this) land in heritage:(4354) We can dwell in the Garden as we will: how excellent a reward for those who work (righteousness)!"

4353 This is said by the new arrivals in heaven. As is right, they begin with the Praises of Allah, which shows at once their satisfaction and their gratitude.

4354 *In heritage: i.e.* as our Portion. *Cf.* 3:180, and n. 485; 6:165, and n. 988. There is no question here of their passing on any property to heirs. They are the final possessors of Heaven for eternity, by the grace of Allah.

75. And thou wilt see the angels surrounding the Throne (Divine) on all sides, singing Glory and Praise to their Lord. The Decision between them (at Judgment) will be in (perfect) justice, and the cry (on all sides) will be, "Praise be to Allah,(4355) the Lord of the Worlds!"

4355 These are the opening words of the first Surah, and they describe the atmosphere of the final Bliss in Heaven, in the Light of the Countenance of their Lord, The Universal Lord of all!



40. Ghafir (Forgiver) or Al Mu'min (The Believer)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Ha Mim(4356)

4356 See paragraphs 2-4 of the Introduction to this Surah.

2. The revelation of this Book is from Allah, Exalted in Power, Full of Knowledge,-(4357)

4357 This verse is the same as 39:1, except for the last words describing the attribute of Allah. In S. 39:1, it was "Full of Wisdom", because stress was laid on the wisdom of Allah's Plan in ordering His World. In this Surah the stress is laid on Allah's Knowledge, before which the shallow knowledge of men is vain (40:83).

3. Who forgiveth sin, accepteth Repentance,(4358) is strict in punishment, and hath a long reach (in all things). there is no god but He: to Him is the final goal.

4358 Allah's knowledge is supreme and all-reaching. But there are other attributes of His, which concern us even more intimately; *e.g.,* He forgives sin and accepts our repentance when it is sincere and results in our change of heart and life: but He is also just, and strict in punishment; and so no loophole will be left for Evil except in repentance. And further, all His attributes reach forward to everything: His Mercy, as well as His Knowledge and Justice; His Bounties as well as His Punishments.

4. None can dispute about the Signs of Allah(4359) but the Unbelievers. Let not, then, their strutting about(4360) through the land deceive thee!

4359 Allah's knowledge and attributes are perfect, and everything around us proclaims this. We are surrounded by His Signs. It is only want of Faith that will make people dispute about them.

4360 *Cf.* 3:196. Their strutting about shows hoe little they can read the signs.

5. But (there were people) before them, who denied (the Signs),- the People of Noah, and the Confederates(4361) (of Evil) after them; and every People plotted against their prophet, to seize him, and disputed by means of vanities,(4362) therewith to condemn the Truth; but it was I that seized them! and how (terrible)(4363) was My Requital!

4361 *Cf.* 38:11-13, and n. 4158. All the hosts of wickedness collected together from history will have no power against Allah's Truth, or the Messenger of that Truth, or Allah's Holy Plan for all His Creation.

4362 Whenever a great or vital Truth is proclaimed and renewed, there are always shallow minds that are ready to dispute about it! And what petty and vain arguments they advance! They think they can discredit or condemn the Truth in this way, or render "of none effect" Allah's Plan. But they are mistaken. If they seem to succeed for a time, that is merely their trial.They may try to plan and plot against Allah's men. But their plots will fail in the long run. They will themselves be caught in their own snares. And then, how terrible will be their Punishment!

4363 *Cf.* 13:32 .

6. Thus was the Decree of thy Lord proved true against the Unbelievers;(4364) that truly they are Companions of the Fire!

4364 *Cf.* 39:71. The Decree, or Word, of Allah, by which Evil was to be judged and condemned, was proved true against these men. They are "Companions of the Fire": in other words, they are fit to live only in the environment of Evil!

7. Those who sustain(4365) the Throne (of Allah. and those around it Sing Glory and Praise to their Lord; believe in Him; and implore Forgiveness for those who believe: "Our Lord! Thy Reach(4366) is over all things, in Mercy and Knowledge. Forgive, then, those who turn in Repentance, and follow Thy Path; and preserve them from the Penalty of the Blazing Fire!

4365 *Cf.* 39:75. (R).

4366 *Cf.* verse 3 above; also 6:80, 7:89, and 7:156.

8. "And grant, our Lord! that they enter the Gardens of Eternity, which Thou hast promised to them, and to the righteous among their fathers,(4367) their wives, and their posterity! For Thou art (He), the Exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom.

4367 There is nothing selfish in prayer. We pray for all who are true and sincere. But just as Evil is catching, so Goodness is catching in another sense. The associates of the Good and those near and dear to them also share in their goodness and happiness, if only they try to walk in the same Way. And the Grace of Allah is working for all, all the time.

9. "And preserve them from (all) ills; and any whom Thou dost preserve from ills(4368) that Day,- on them wilt Thou have bestowed Mercy indeed: and that will be truly (for them) the highest Achievement".(4369)

4368 That is the final Judgement, and any who is saved from the evil consequences of their deeds in this life will truly have been saved by Allah's Mercy, and for them it is the highest achievement they could have, the attainment of all their wishes, the fulfilment of their destiny and the noblest purpose of their Life, the supreme Salvation and Felicity.

4369 Muslim Salvation, then, is more positive than mere safety from dangers or evils: it is the complete fulfilment of the noble destiny of man in the attainment of the fullest Grace,

10. The Unbelievers will be addressed: "Greater was the aversion of Allah to you(4370) than (is) your aversion to yourselves, seeing that ye were called to the Faith and ye used to refuse."

4370 The Unbelievers having rejected Allah's Signs, they now see how they are shut out from Grace, and they feel disgusted with themselves. How much greater was Allah's displeasure with them, when He showered mercy upon mercy on them and they yet rebelled! How could they now hope for Grace!

11. They will say: "Our Lord! twice hast Thou made us(4371) without life, and twice hast Thou given us Life! Now have we recognised our sins: Is there any way out (of this)?"

4371 *Cf.* 2:28: "How can ye reject the faith in Allah?-seeing that ye were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return." Nonexistence, or existence as clay without life was equivalent to death. Then came true Life on this earth; then came physical death or the cessation of our physical life; and now at the Resurrection, is the second life.

12. (The answer will be:) "This is because, when Allah was invoked as the Only (object of worship),(4372) ye did reject Faith, but when partners were joined to Him, ye believed! the Command is with Allah,(4373) Most High, Most Great!"

4372 *Cf.* 39:45, and n. 4313. When exclusive devotion is not rendered to Allah, there is no true understanding, in the mind of a creature, of his own true position, or of the working of the Divine Will and Purpose. How can he then hope to achieve the purpose of his life, or obtain Allah's Mercy, which is the only way to obtain release from the consequences of Sin?

4373 At the Judgement, the matter will have passed out of the stage at which further chances could have been hoped for. But in any case Allah is High above all things, Great above all that we can conceive of, both in Mercy and injustice. The Decision will be with Him, and Him alone.

13. He it is Who showeth you his Signs, and sendeth down sustenance for you(4374) from the sky: but only those receive admonition who turn (to Allah..

4374 Lest it should be thought that Allah's Grace did not meet the Sinner again and again and offer Allah's Mercy again and again, it is pointed out that Allah's Signs were freely vouchsafed everywhere and continuously, and that every kind of means was provided for man's "Sustenance" or growth and development, physical, mental, and spiritual. But only those could take advantage of it who turned their attention to Allah, who submitted their will to Him.

14. Call ye, then, upon Allah with sincere devotion to Him, even though the Unbelievers(4375) may detest it.

4375 *Cf.* 9:33 .

15. Raised high above ranks (or degrees),(4376) (He is) the Lord of the Throne (of Authority): by His Command doth He send the Spirit (of inspiration) to any of His servants(4377) he pleases, that it may warn (men) of the Day of Mutual Meeting,-(4378)

4376 He is raised far above any rank or degree which we can imagine. It is possible also to treat *Rafi',* as equivalent to *Rafi,* meaning that He can raise His creatures to the highest ranks and degrees in His spiritual kingdom, for He is the fountain of all honour.

4377 The choosing of a man to be the recipient of inspiration-to be the standard bearer of Allah's Truth-is the highest honour possible in the spiritual Kingdom, And Allah bestows that honour according to His own most perfect Will and Plan, which no one can question, for He is the fountain of all honour, dignity, and authority.

4378 All men will meet together and meet their Lord at the Resurrection, no matter how far scattered they may have been in life or in death.

16. The Day whereon they will (all) come forth: not a single thing concerning them is hidden from Allah. Whose will be the dominion that Day?"(4379) That of Allah, the One the Irresistible!

4379 The Kingdom of Allah—of Justice, Truth, and Righteousness-will then be fully established. Evil can then no more come into competition with Good, even in the subjective consciousness of man.

17. That Day will every soul be requited for what it earned; no injustice will there be that Day, for Allah is Swift(4380) in taking account.

4380 *Swift in* several senses: (1) the time of the present life or of the interval before Judgement, *i.e.,* before the restoration of true values, is so short as compared to Eternity, that it may be counted as negligible: in the next verse the Day is characterised as "(ever) drawing near"; (2) in spite of the great concourse of souls to be judged, the process of Judgement will be almost instantaneous, "in the twinkling of an eye" (16:77), because everything is already known to Allah; and yet not the least injustice will be done.

18. Warn them of the Day that is (ever) drawing near, when the hearts will (come) right up to the Throats(4381) to choke (them); No intimate friend(4382) nor intercessor will the wrong-doers have, who could be listened to.

4381 *Hearts will come right up to the Throats to choke them;* an idiom implying that the whole of their life-functions will be choked up with terror. But a more subtle meaning emerges from further analysis. The heart (or the breast) is the seat of affection, emotion, and every kind of feeling, such as terror; pain, despair, etc. These things will as it were overflow right up to the throat and choke it. The throat is the vehicle for the voice; their voice will be choked, and they will be able to say nothing. The throat is the channel for food, which goes to the stomach and maintains a healthy functioning of life; the choking means that the healthy functioning will stop, and there will be nothing but woe.

4382 In that enforcement of personal responsibility, what sympathy or intercession can the wrongdoers get? Is *Hamim* in any way connected with the Abbreviated Letters *Ha Mim* attached to this Surah? See Introduction.

19. ((Allah)) knows of (the tricks) that deceive with the eyes,(4383) and all that the hearts (of men) conceal.(4384)

4383 Men may be taken in by tricks that deceive with the eyes, but Allah's perfect knowledge penetrates through all mysteries. "Deceive with the eyes" may mean several things: (1) a sleight of hand (literally or figuratively) may deceive in respect of the eyes of beholders, for the things that they see do not actually happen; (2) it may be the deceiver's own eyes that play false, because, for example, they show love when hatred is meant; or (3) it may be that the eyes of the beholder play him false, in that he sees things that he should not see, and thus sins with his eyes.

4384 Here we come into the region of evil motives and thoughts which may be concealed in the hearts, breast, or mind, but which are all perfectly known to Allah.

20. And Allah will judge with (justice and) Truth: but those whom (men) invoke besides Him, will not (be in a position) to judge at all. Verily it is Allah (alone) Who hears and sees(4385) (all things).

4385 If men build their hopes or their faith in anything except the Divine Grace, they will find themselves deserted. Any pretences that they make will be known to Allah. On the other hand every single good act, or word, or motive, or aspiration of their will, will reach Allah's Throne of Mercy.

21. Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the End of those before them?(4386) They were even superior to them in strength, and in the traces (they(4387) Have left) in the land: but Allah did call them to account for their sins, and none had they to defend them against Allah.

4386 *Cf.* 30:9. and several other similar passages.

4387 See n. 3515 to 30:9. We can learn from the history of previous nations. Many of them were more powerful, or have left finer and more imposing monuments and made a deeper impression on the world around them than any particular generation addressed. "Traces" in the text may be taken in that extended sense. And yet all this did not save them from the consequences of their sins. They were called to account and punished. None of the power or pomp or skill of which they boasted could for a moment ward off the punishment when it came in Allah's good time (*Cf.* 40:82).

22. That was because there came to them their messengers(4388) with Clear (Signs), but they rejected them: So Allah called them to account: for He is Full of Strength, Strict in Punishment.

4388 But Allah in His Mercy always sends a Message of warning and good news through his messengers, and He gives His messengers Clear Signs and an authority that can be recognised. Among the Clear Signs are: (1) the pure and unselfish lives of the messengers; (2) the revelation of truth which they bring; (3) their influence on the course of events in their own and succeeding generations; etc. Some of these may be so remarkable that they merit the name of Miracles.

23. Of old We sent Moses,(4389) with Our Signs and an authority manifest,

4389 This is not the story of Moses himself, so much as an introduction to the story of the one j ust man who believed, in the court of Pharaoh: see verse 28 below. This Surah's alternate title ("The Believer") refers to him.

24. To Pharaoh, Haman,(4390) and Qarun; but they called (him)" a sorcerer telling lies!"...

4390 Here are three types of Unfaith, each showing a different phase, and yet all united in opposition to the Truth and Mission of Moses. (1) Pharaoh is the type of arrogance, cruelty, and reliance on brute force; *Cf.* 28:38-39. (2) Haman was Pharaoh's minister (n. 3331 to 28:6; also 28:38): he was the type of a sycophant who would pander to the vanity of any man in power. (3) Qarun excelled in his wealth, was selfish in its use, and overbearing to the poor (28:76-81. and n. 3404). They all came to an evil end eventually.

25. Now, when he came to them(4391) in Truth, from Us, they said, "Slay the sons of those who believe(4392) with him, and keep alive their females," but the plots of Unbelievers (end) in nothing but errors (and delusions)!...

4391 Verse 24 described the opposition of three types of Unfaith, which opposed Faith, in different ways, as described in the last note. Qarun, in his overweening insolence, may well have called Moses and Aaron "sorcerers telling lies" in the Sinai desert, as he despised priests and men of God, and might cast the Egyptian reproach in their teeth as a reminiscence. Here, in verse 25, we have an episode about the time of the birth of Moses: "them" and "they" refer to Pharaoh and his Court; the "coming" of Moses here refers to the time of his birth. On that construction, "with him", lower down in their speech would be elliptical, referring to "slay the sons", as if they had said, "Kill all Israelite male children: the unknown Prophet to be born would be amongst them: so kill them all with him." In verse 26 we again skip some years and recall an episode when Moses, having got his mission, stood in Pharaoh's Court, and some of the Egyptian Commonalty were almost ready to believe in him.

4392 That is, the Israelites, for they were the custodians of Allah's Faith then. For the slaughter of Israelite children by Pharaoh, see 27:4-6, and notes.

26. Said Pharaoh: "Leave me to slay Moses; and let him call on his Lord!(4393) What I fear is lest he should change your religion,(4394) or lest he should cause mischief to appear in the land!"

4393 This is an episode that occurs when Moses, invested with his mission, confronts Pharaoh in his Court and preaches to him: see 20:49 and following verses; also 20:57 , 63.

4394 Some of Pharaoh's people did afterwards give up the worship of Pharaoh and of the Egyptian gods and believed "in the Lord of Aaron and Moses" and in fact suffered martyrdom for the Faith of Unity: 20:70-73.

27. Moses said: "I have indeed called upon my Lord and your Lord(4395) (for protection) from every arrogant one who believes not in the Day of Account!"

4395 The whole point of the Gospel of Unity which Moses preached was that the God of Moses and the God of Pharaoh, of Israel and Egypt , the Lord of all the Worlds, was One-Allah, the only True God See 20:49-50 and notes 2572 and 2573. (R).

28. A believer, a man(4396) from among the people of Pharaoh, who had concealed his faith, said: "Will ye slay a man because he says, ´My Lord is Allah.?- when he has indeed come to you with Clear (Signs) from your Lord? and if he be a liar, on him is (the sin of) his lie: but, if he is telling(4397) the Truth, then will fall on you something of the (calamity) of which he warns you: Truly Allah guides not one(4398) who transgresses and lies!

4396 There is nothing to justify the identification of this man with the man mentioned in 28:20, who warned Moses long before Moses had received his mission. On the contrary, in this passage, the man is evidently speaking after Moses had received his mission, preached to Pharaoh, and got a certain amount of success, for which Pharaoh and his people were trying to seek his life. Moses had evidently already brought his Clear Signs.

4397 A commonsense view is put before them by an Egyptian who loves his own people and does not wish them to perish in sin. "Will you kill this man for calling on Allah? Have you not seen his character and behaviour? Do you not see the 'Clear Signs' about him that bespeak his credentials? Suppose for a moment that he is a liar and pretender: he will suffer for his falsehood, but why should you turn against Allah? But suppose that he is really inspired by Allah to tell you the truth and warn you against evil, what will be your fate when Allah's Wrath descends? For it must descend if he is a true Messenger sent by Allah."

4398 This is with reference to the "Clear Signs". 'They are Signs of Allah's guidance, for Allah would never guide a man who exceeds the bounds of truth and tells you lies! Such a man is bound to be found out!'

29. "O my People! Yours is the dominion this day: Ye have the upper hand(4399) in the land: but who will help us from the Punishment of Allah, should it befall us?" Pharaoh said: "I but point out to you that which I see (myself);(4400) Nor do I guide you but to the Path of Right!"

4399 'Do not be puffed up with arrogance because the power is in your hands at present! Do you deserve it? Will it last? If you are sinning and drawing upon yourselves Allah's Punishment, is there anything that can shield you from it?'

4400 Pharaoh's egotism and arrogance come out. 'I can see and understand everything. As I see things, so do I direct you. The Path which I see must be right, and you must follow it.'

30. Then said the man who believed: "O my people! Truly I do fear for you something like(4401) the Day (of disaster) of the Confederates (in sin)!-(4402)

4401 He appeals to past history "Have you not heard of people who lived before you?-like the generations of Noah, 'Ad, Thamud, and many more-who held together in sin against Allah's Preachers, but were wiped out for their sins?"

4402 *Cf.* 38:11-13, and n. 4158, also 40:5, and n. 4361.

31. "Something like the fate of the People of Noah, the ´Ad, and the Thamud, and those who came after them: but Allah never wishes injustice(4403) to his Servants.

4403 'All these disasters happened in history, and they will happen again to you if you do not give up evil. Do not for a moment think that Allah is unjust. It is you who are deliberately preparing the disasters by your conduct.'

32. "And O my people! I fear for you a Day(4404) when there will be Mutual calling (and wailing),-

4404 This Day may refer to the Day of Judgement, of which three features are here referred to. (1) People may wail and call to each other, but no one can help another: each one will have his own judgement to face; (2) the wicked will then be driven to Hell from the Judgement Seat; and (3) there will be no one to help, guide, or intercede, because the grace and guidance of Allah had already been rejected. But the words are perfectly general, and are applicable to all stages at which the Wrath of Allah is manifest.

33. "A Day when ye shall turn your backs and flee: No defender shall ye have from Allah. Any whom Allah leaves to stray, there is none to guide...

34. "And to you there came Joseph in times gone by,(4405) with Clear Signs, but ye ceased not to doubt of the (Mission) for which he had come: At length, when he died, ye said: ´No messenger will Allah send(4406) after him.´ thus doth Allah leave to stray such as transgress and live in doubt,-

4405 So far he has been speaking of general religious tradition. Now, as an Egyptian, addressing Egyptians, he refers to the mission of Joseph in Egypt . Joseph was not born in Egypt , nor was he an Egyptian. With what wonderful incidents he came into Egypt ! What difficulties did he not surmount among his own brothers first, and in the Egyptian family which afterwards adopted him! How injustice, spite, and forgetfulness on the part of others, yet wove a spell round him and made him a ruler and saviour of Egypt in times of famine! How he preached to prisoners in prison, to Zulaykha in her household, to the Egyptian ladies in their banquet, and to the Court of Pharaoh generally! The Egyptians profited by the material gains which came to them through him, but as a nation remained sceptical of his spiritual truths for many generations after him. (*Cf.* S. 12).

4406 See Appendix IV, p. 406, for a discussion of the interval between Joseph and Moses. Perhaps the interval was about one to three centuries, a very short period for the memory of a learned nation like the Egyptians. And yet they as a nation ignored his spiritual work, and afterwards even persecuted Israel in Egypt until Moses delivered them. They actually saw the benefits conferred by Joseph, but did not realise that Allah's Kingdom works continuously even though men ignore it. See Appendix V, pp. 408-13; for a sketch of Religion in Egypt . For such men how could the Grace and Guidance of Allah be effective in their hearts?

35. "(Such) as dispute about the Signs of Allah, without any authority that hath reached them, grievous and odious (is such conduct) in the sight of Allah and of the Believers. Thus doth Allah seal up(4407) every heart - of arrogant and obstinate Transgressors."

4407 See the last note. The arrogant transgressors having closed their hearts to the Message of Allah and to every appeal made to them, it followed by Allah's Law that their hearts were sealed up to any fresh influences for good. *Cf.* 7:100; also 2:7, and n. 31.

36. Pharaoh said: "O Haman! Build me a lofty palace,(4408) that I may attain the ways and means-

4408 *Cf.* 28:38, and n. 3371. There are two points to be noted here. (1) Pharaoh, in the arrogance of his materialism, thinks of the Kingdom of Heaven like a kingdom on earth; he thinks of spiritual things in terms of palaces and ladders: notice that the word *asbab* (ways and means) is emphasised by repetition. (2) His sarcasm turns Moses and Allah to ridicule. Really he does not believe in anything spiritual, and he frankly states that 'for his part he thinks Moses is a liar', though other men less lofty than he (Pharaoh) may be deceived by the Clear Signs of Moses.

37. "The ways and means of (reaching) the heavens, and that I may mount up to the Allah of Moses: But as far as I am concerned, I think (Moses) is a liar!" Thus was made alluring,(4409) in Pharaoh´s eyes, the evil of his deeds, and he was hindered from the Path; and the plot(4410) of Pharaoh led to nothing but perdition (for him).

4409 Pharaoh's speech shows how his own egotism and haughty arrogance brought him to this pass, that even the evil which he did seemed alluring in his own eyes! His heart was indeed sealed, and his arrogance prevented him from seeing the right path. (With the Kufi Qira'ah I read *sudda* in the passive voice).

4410 Pharaoh had plotted to slay Moses (40:26) and to kill the Children of Israel (40:25). The plot recoiled on his own head and on the head of his people who joined in the plot; for they were all drowned in the Red Sea .

38. The man who believed said further: "O my people! Follow me: I will lead you to the Path of Right.(4411)

4411 Note the contrast between the earnest beseeching tone of the Believer here and the hectoring tone of Pharaoh in using similar words in 40:29 above.

39. "O my people! This life of the present is nothing but (temporary) convenience: It is the Hereafter that is the Home that will last.(4412)

4412 Faith makes him see the contrast between vanities, even though they may glitter temporarily, and the eternal Good that is destined for man.

40. "He that works evil will not be requited but by the like thereof: and he that works a righteous deed - whether man or woman - and is a Believer- such will enter the Garden (of Bliss): Therein will they have abundance(4413) without measure.

4413 *Cf.* 2:212. The spiritual Good will not only last. It will be a most liberal reward, far above any merits of the recipient.

41. "And O my people! How (strange) it is(4414) for me to call you to Salvation while ye call me to the Fire!

4414 It may seem strange according to the laws of this world that he should be seeking their Good while they are seeking his damnation! But that is the merit of Faith. Its mission is to rescue its enemies and Allah's enemies, as far as their will will consent!

42. "Ye do call upon me to blaspheme against Allah,(4415) and to join with Him partners of whom I have no knowledge; and I call you to the Exalted in Power, Who forgives again and again!"

4415 The worship of Pharaoh was but typical of Egyptian blasphemy, but it had many sides, including the worship of heroes, animals, powers of good and evil in nature, and idols of all kinds. It is this comprehensive cult which required forgiveness again and again, but Allah is Exalted in Power, and gives such forgiveness on repentance.

43. "Without doubt ye do call me to one who is not fit to be called to,(4416) whether in this world, or in the Hereafter; our return will be to Allah. and the Transgressors will be Companions of the Fire!

4416 Faith is not content with its own inner vision and conviction. It can give ample arguments. Three are mentioned here: (1) nothing but Allah is worthy of worship, either in this world of sense or in the spiritual world; (2) our Return will be to Allah, the Eternal Reality; and (3) the worship of Falsehood must necessarily lead to the Penalty of Falsehood, unless Allah's Mercy intervenes and forgives on our sincere repentance. (R).

44. "Soon will ye remember what I say to you (now).(4417) My (own) affair I commit to Allah. for Allah (ever) watches over His Servants."

4417 The wording suggests as if there was a plot to kill him, but he was saved, as the next verse shows. His thought to the last is with his People. 'No matter what you do to me: you will have cause to remember my admonition, when perhaps it is too late for you to repent. For my part I commit myself to the care of Allah, and my Faith tells me that all will be right.'

45. Then Allah saved him from (every) ill that they plotted (against him), but the burnt of the Penalty(4418) encompassed on all sides the People of Pharaoh.

4418 The Pharaoh of the time of Moses, and his people, suffered many calamities in this world: 7:130-136. But those were nothing to the spiritual Penalties mentioned in the next verse.

46. In front of the Fire will they be brought, morning and evening:(4419) And (the sentence will be) on the Day that Judgment will be established: "Cast ye the People of Pharaoh into the severest Penalty!"

4419 When the Judgement really comes, it is not like an ordinary physical disaster. The Fire of Punishment is ever present-morning and evening-i.e., at all times. The sentence becomes final and there is no mitigation.

47. Behold, they will dispute with each other in the Fire!(4420) The weak ones (who followed) will say to those who had been arrogant, "We but followed you: Can ye then take (on yourselves) from us some share of the Fire?

4420 Just as Unity, Harmony, and Peace are symbols of Truth, Bliss, and Salvation, so Reproaches, Disputes, and Disorders are symbols of Hell.

48. Those who had been arrogant will say: "We are all(4421) in this (Fire)! Truly, Allah has judged between (his) Servants!"

4421 Note the evasion and cynicism of the answer, befitting the character of spiritual misleaders! 'What! are we not suffering with you in the same Fire! Pray to Allah if you like! He has pronounced His Judgement!' *Cf.* 14:21-22.

49. Those in the Fire will say to the Keepers of Hell:(4422) "Pray to your Lord to lighten us the Penalty for a day (at least)!"

4422 *Cf.* 39:71. The poor misguided ones will turn to the angels who are their Keepers, asking them to pray and intercede for them. But the angels are set there to watch over them, not to intercede for them. In their innocence they ask, 'Did you have no warnings from messengers, men like yourselves, in your past life?'

50. They will say: "Did there not come to you your messengers with Clear Signs?" They will say, "Yes". They will reply, "Then(4423) pray (as ye like)! But the prayer of those without Faith is nothing but (futile wandering) in (mazes of) error!"

4423 The answer being in the affirmative, they will have to tell the dreadful truth: 'This is neither the time nor the place for prayer, for mercy! And in any case, Prayer without Faith is Delusion, and must miss its mark.' *Cf.* 13:14 .

51. We will, without doubt, help our messengers and those who believe, (both) in this world´s life and on the Day when the Witnesses(4424) will stand forth,-

4424 The Day of Judgement is described as "the Day when Witnesses will stand forth". This description implies two things: (1) that there man will be judged justly; his past actions and his faculties and opportunities will be witnesses as to the use he made of them (24:24); intact he will himself be a witness against himself (6:130); and the prophets and just men will bear witness to the fact that they preached and warned men (39:69; 2:133).

52. The Day when no profit will it be to Wrong-doers to present their excuses,(4425) but they will (only) have the Curse and the Home of Misery.

4425 After the testimony mentioned in the last note, there will be no room for excuses, and if any were made, they could serve no purpose, unlike the state of matters in this world, where there is much make-believe, and Falsehood often masquerades as Truth and is accepted as such even by those who should know better.

53. We did aforetime give Moses the (Book of) Guidance,(4426) and We gave the book in inheritance to the Children of Israel,-

4426 Moses was given a Revelation, and it was given in heritage to the Children of Israel, to preserve it, guide their conduct by, and hold aloft its Message; but they failed in all these particulars.

54. A Guide and a Message to men of Understanding.

55. Patiently, then, persevere:(4427) for the Promise of Allah is true: and ask forgiveness(4428) for thy fault, and celebrate the Praises of thy Lord in the evening and in the morning.(4429)

4427 The Israelites corrupted or lost their Book: they disobeyed Allah's Law; and failed to proclaim and exemplify Allah's Message. That is why the new Revelation came to the Prophet. If, in the beginning, it was rejected and persecuted, there was no cause for discouragement; on the contrary, there was all the greater need for patience and perseverance.

4428 Every mortal according to his nature and degree of spiritual enlightenment falls short of the perfect standard of Allah (16:61), and should therefore ask Allah for forgiveness. What is merit in an ordinary man may be a human shortcoming in one nearest to Allah: see 38:24-25, and notes 4175-4176. Prophets have a further responsibility for their People or their Ummah, and they ask in a representative capacity.

4429 *Cf.* 3:41 . Evening and morning are the best times for contemplation and spiritual effort. But the phrase "evening and morning" may mean "at all times". (R).

56. Those who dispute about the signs of Allah without any authority bestowed on them,- there is(4430) nothing in their breasts but (the quest of) greatness, which they shall never attain to: seek refuge, then, in Allah. It is He Who hears and sees (all things).

4430 The Disputes are actuated by nothing but the desire for self-glory and self-aggrandizement. Their desire is not likely to receive fruition, but others should take warning from it.

57. Assuredly the creation(4431) of the heavens and the earth is a greater (matter) than the creation of men: Yet most men understand not.

4431 The heavens and the earth include mankind and all other creatures and millions of stars. Man is himself but a tiny part of creation. Why should he be so egocentric? The whole is greater than a tiny part of it. And Allah Who created the whole of the Worlds is able to do much more wonderful things than can enter the imagination of man. Why should man be arrogant and doubt the Resurrection, and take upon himself to doubt the possibility of Allah's Revelation? It is only because he has made himself blind. See next verse.

58. Not equal are the blind and those who (clearly) see:(4432) Nor are (equal) those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and those who do evil. Little do ye learn by admonition!

4432 The man of Faith who backs his faith by righteous conduct is like the man of clear vision, who sees things in their true perspective and walks with firm steps in the Way of Allah. The man who does evil is like a blind man: the Light of Allah is all around him, but the man has made himself blind, and he can see nothing. He has rejected Faith and cannot even learn by other people's admonition.

59. The Hour will certainly come:(4433) Therein is no doubt: Yet most men believe not.

4433 "The Hour" is the crown and consummation of man's life on this earth—the gateway to the Hereafter.

60. And your Lord says: "Call on Me; I will answer your (Prayer):(4434) but those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely find themselves in Hell - in humiliation!"

4434 As this life is not the end of all things, and we are to have its fulfillment in the Hereafter, we have only to pray to the Lord of the Present and the Hereafter, and He will hear us, forgive us, guide us, and make our Path smooth. But Pride will have its fall-and its humiliating Punishment. *Cf.* 37:18.

61. It is Allah Who has(4435) made the Night for you, that ye may rest therein, and the days as that which helps (you) to see. Verily Allah is full of Grace and Bounty to men: yet most men give no thanks.

4435 The succession of Day and Night in our physical life is frequently appealed to, as a symbol to draw our attention to the Mercy and Bounty of Allah. If we viewed these things aright, we should serve Allah and seek Light from Him and Rest from Him, and celebrate His praises with gratitude.

62. Such is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of all things, there is no god but He: Then how ye are deluded(4436) away from the Truth!

4436 If we worship false gods, *i.e.,* go after vanities, what is it that deludes us and leads us astray? What could it be but our rank ingratitude and failure to use the understanding which Allah has given us?

63. Thus are deluded those(4437) who are wont to reject the Signs of Allah.

4437 See the last two notes. If men are deluded by Falsehoods, it is because they reject Revelation and refuse to learn from the Signs of Allah all around them.

64. It is Allah Who has(4438) made for you the earth as a resting place,(4439) and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape-(4440) and made your shapes beautiful,- and has provided for you Sustenance,(4441) of things pure and good;- such is Allah your Lord. So Glory to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!

4438 The argument in the last two verses was from man's personal experience of his physical life. In this and the next verse a parallel argument is addressed to man on a much higher plane: 'look at the spacious earth and the canopy of the sky; look at the special position you occupy above other animals that you know, in shape and form, and moral and spiritual capacities; consider your refinements in food and fruits and the higher spiritual Sustenance of which your physical food is a type; would you not indeed say that the Lord is good, and would you not glorify His Holy Name?'

4439 *A resting place.* I understand this to imply a temporary place of rest or sojourn, a period of probation, to be followed by the eternal Home.

4440 *Cf.* 7:11 and n. 996. The shape and form refer to the physical form as well as to the inborn moral and spiritual capacities of man. As regards physical form, *Cf.* Milton's description of Adam and Eve, "Two of far noble shape, erect and tall" *(Paradise Lost,* 4:288). As regards moral and spiritual capacities, they are typified by the breathing of Allah's spirit into man: 15:29 (see also 64:3).

4441 *"Sustenance"* all that is necessary for growth and development, physical, moral, and spiritual (*Cf.* n. 2105 and 16:73).

65. He is the Living (One):(4442) There is no god but He: Call upon Him, giving Him sincere devotion. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds!

4442 The real, self-subsisting Life is only in Him. *Cf.* 2:255, and n. 296. All other forms of life are but shadows compared to His perfect Light.

66. Say: "I have been forbidden(4443) to invoke those whom ye invoke besides Allah,- seeing that the Clear Sings have come to me from my Lord; and I have been commanded to bow (in Islam) to the Lord of the Worlds."

4443 All objects of worship besides Allah are mere delusions. To anyone who sees this clearly, through Allah's Self-revelations, the only possible course is to give up everything else, which his own inner experience as well as outer Revelation tell him is false or of a temporary nature, and to bring his own will and actions into complete unison with Allah's Will: for that is the meaning of Islam, bowing to the Will of Allah. When we bow to the Real and Everlasting, we are automatically saved from falling victims to the False and Evanescent. (R).

67. It is He Who has(4444) created you from dust then from a sperm-drop, then from a leech-like clot; then does he get you out (into the light) as a child: then lets you (grow and) reach your age of full strength; then lets you become old,- though of you there are some who die before;- and lets you reach a Term appointed; in order that ye may learn wisdom.

4444 *Cf.* this passage with 22:5 and notes 2773 and 2774. The various stages of man's physical life are: (!) first, simple matter (dust); (2) the sperm-drop in the father; (3) the fertilised ovum in the mother's womb; (4) out into the light, as a human child; (5) youth and full maturity; (6) decay; and (7) death. In some cases the late stages are curtailed or cut off; but in any case, a Term appointed is reached, so that the higher purpose of Allah's Will and Plan may be fulfilled in each given case, that man "may learn wisdom".

68. It is He Who gives Life(4445) and Death; and when He decides upon an affair, He says to it, "Be", and it is.

4445 The keys of life and death are in Allah's hands. But He is not dependent on time or place or instruments or materials. All that He has to do is to say "Be", and it comes into existence. *Cf.* 16:40 , and n. 2066; 36:82, and n. 4028. Conversely, His Will or Command is sufficient to annihilate Existence into Non-Existence (Life into Death) or determine the limits or conditions of Existence or Non-Existence.

69. Seest thou not those that dispute concerning the Sings of Allah. How are they turned away(4446) (from Reality)?-

4446 Those who dispute about the Signs of Allah which are clear to all who care to see, are merely in the mists of Unreality: *Cf.* 10:32 .

70. Those who reject the Book(4447) and the (revelations) with which We sent our messengers: but soon shall they know,-

4447 "The Book" may refer to the Holy Qur'an or to the fundamental Revelation, the "Mother of the Book" (13:39), while the Books revealed to the messengers are the definite Revelations that came down to men from time to time.

71. When the yokes (shall be)(4448) round their necks, and the chains; they shall be dragged along-

4448 The rejection of Allah's Message, however brought, carries its own penalty. The yoke of spiritual slavery to Sin and Evil is fastened more and more firmly round the rejecter's neck, because there is no one to safeguard his freedom, and the chains of superstitions and the ugly consequences of evil restrict his freedom and the limited faculty of choice which was given by Allah to man. This process receives its climax at the Hour of Judgement.

72. In the boiling fetid fluid;(4449) then in the Fire shall they be burned;

4449 The sinner gets dragged further and further in the disgusting consequences of his evil actions, until the fire of destruction closes in upon him.

73. Then shall it be said to them: "Where are the (deities) to which ye gave part- worship-

74. "In derogation of Allah." They will reply: "They have(4450) left us in the lurch: Nay, we invoked not, of old, anything (that had real existence)." Thus does Allah leave the Unbelievers to stray.

4450 All falsehood will vanish: *Cf.* 7:37 . The only Reality will be fully manifest even to those to whom Evil was made to seem alluring in the lower life. They will feel in their inmost souls that they had been pursuing mere shadows, things of no real existence. This was the result of their rejecting the Light and the Grace of Allah: they got entangled in the mazes of error.

75. "That was because(4451) ye were wont to rejoice on the earth in things other than the Truth, and that ye were wont to be insolent.

4451 Allah does not withdraw His grace from any unless (1) they actively and deliberately take a delight in things that are vain or false, and (2) they insolently reject the things that are true-in other words, unless men are deliberately false to their own lights, as illuminated by the Light of Allah.

76. "Enter ye the gates(4452) of Hell, to dwell therein: and evil is (this) abode of the arrogant!"

4452 *Cf.* 39:72.

77. So persevere in patience; for the Promise of Allah is true: and whether(4453) We show thee (in this life) some part of what We promise them,- or We take thy soul (to Our Mercy) (before that),-(in any case) it is to Us that they shall (all) return.

4453 *Cf.* 10:46 , and n. 1438. As the eventual justice and readjustment of values must take place, when every soul returns to the Judgement Seat of Allah, it makes no difference if good and evil meet their deserts in this very life or not. *Cf.* also 13:40 .

78. We did aforetime send messengers before thee: of them(4454) there are some whose story We have related to thee, and some whose story We have not related to thee. It was not (possible) for any messenger to bring a sign except by the leave of Allah. but when the Command(4455) of Allah issued, the matter was decided in truth and justice, and there perished, there and then those who stood on Falsehoods.

4454 *Cf.* 4:164. Allah sent Messengers of His Truth to every people. There are some whose names are known to us through the Holy Qur' an, but there are a large number whose names are not made known to us through that medium. We must recognise the Truth wherever we find it.

4455 The Signs of Allah are everywhere, and can be seen by the discerning eye at all times. But if any extraordinary Signs are demanded by cynics or Unbelievers, they will not be granted merely because they are demanded. It is Allah's Will that issues them, not merely the desire of human beings, even if he be a Messenger of Allah. But when an extraordinary Sign does issue by the Command of Allah, it means that the cup of the iniquitous is full; that their case is decided, and their time of respite is past; and that Justice takes the place of Mercy, and evil is blotted out.

79. It is Allah Who made(4456) cattle for you, that ye may use some for riding and some for food;

4456 *Cf.* 16:5-8. The fact that beasts, which in their wild state are so noxious, are, when domesticated, so useful to man, is itself one of the great and standing Signs of Allah's care for man. The great usefulness of cattle is very instructive. They serve for riding, and many of them for food; further, they are used for the plough, and they produce milk, or wool or hair; and from their carcases man derives bones and horns for many industrial uses; but passing on to the higher aspects of life, they further social, moral, and spiritual uses as draught-animals, in that transport serves one of the fundamental purposes of civilisation, being in this respect like ships for international commerce: 30:46, and n. 3565. It is by means of human intercourse through transport that we can carry out the highest needs of our culture, "any need there may be in our hearts", *i.e.,* in our inner being.

80. And there are (other) advantages in them for you (besides); that ye may through them attain to any need (there may be) in your hearts; and on them and on ships ye are carried.

81. And He shows you (always)(4457) His Signs: then which of the Signs of Allah will ye deny?

4457 The Signs of Allah's goodness and mercy are so numerous that it is impossible to enumerate them. Which of them can any mortal deny? This is the theme of that highly poetical Surah , *Al Rahman* (S. 55).

82. Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the End of those before them? They were more numerous than these and superior in strength(4458) and in the traces (they have left) in the land: Yet all that they accomplished was of no profit to them.

4458 *Cf.* 9:69. For any generation to take inordinate pride in its own single achievements in science or skill becomes ridiculous if we consider the broad stream of history- In the first place, men will find that a great deal of what they attribute to their own merits only became possible owing to the earlier work of their predecessors. Secondly, many of their predecessors were more numerous and mightier in power than they, although the perspective of time may have reduced the apparent depth of their influence, and the monuments which they have left behind may have suffered from the destroying hand of Time. Thirdly, and most important of all, when they forgot Allah and His inexorable Law, nothing of their own handiwork profited them: they perished in the common ruin as all vanities must perish. *Cf.* also 40:21 above, and n. 4387. See how the recapitulation rounds off the argument.

83. For when their messengers came to them with Clear Signs, they exulted(4459) in such knowledge (and skill) as they had; but that very (Wrath) at which(4460) they were wont to scoff hemmed them in.

4459 Arrogance and an exaggerated idea of Self were at the bottom of the Evil to which they succumbed (*Cf.* n. 4350).

4460 *Cf.* 16:34 . Nothing could stop the Justice of Allah punishing Evil. What they had ridiculed came as an inexorable fact. None of their grandeur or art or science or skill was of any use when they lost their souls!

84. But when they saw Our Punishment, they said: "We believe in Allah,- the one Allah - and we reject the partners we used to join with Him."

85. But their professing the Faith(4461) when they (actually) saw Our Punishment was not going to profit them. (Such has been) Allah.s Way of dealing with His Servants (from the most ancient times). And even thus did the Rejecters of Allah perish (utterly)!

4461 Again and again were they given chances, and again and again did they reject them. When it was too late, and in fact when it had no meaning, they offered to profess Faith. That was of no use. Allah does not accept unmeaning things of that kind. He wants to train and purify our will. For their disobedience and rebellion they perished utterly.

41. Fussilat (Expounded) or Ha Mim

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Ha Mim:(4462)

4462 Abbreviated Letters: See Introduction to S. 40. See also n. 4382 to 40:8, and n. 4505 to 41:34.

2. A Revelation from (Allah),(4463) Most Gracious, Most Merciful;-

4463 In the last Surah (40:2-3) the revelation was described with reference to some of the qualities of Allah from Whom it came. Here it is described mainly with reference to its subject matter. (1) It brings the Message of Grace and Mercy; (2) it is not merely a book of Dark Sayings, but everything is explained clearly and from various points of view; (3) it is in Arabic, the language of the people among whom it was first promulgated, and therefore easily intelligible to them if they take the trouble to understand; and (4) it opens the way to Forgiveness through Repentance and gives warning of all spiritual Dangers.

3. A Book, whereof the verses are explained in detail;- a Qur´an in Arabic, for people who understand;-

4. Giving good news and admonition: yet most(4464) of them turn away, and so they hear not.

4464 With all the qualities mentioned in the last note, if men do not profit by its blessings, the fault lies in their will: they turn away, and thus fail to hear the voice that calls to them.

5. They say: "Our hearts are(4465) under veils, (concealed) from that to which thou dost invite us, and in our ears in a deafness, and between us and thee is a screen: so do(4466) thou (what thou wilt); for us, we shall do (what we will!)"

4465 The consequence of their wilful rejection is that a distance is created between Revelation and those for whom it is meant; their ears become deaf, so that the voice falls fainter and fainter on their ears: they feel a bar between themselves and the Messenger who comes to teach them *(Cf.* 6:25).

4466 This is either a superiority complex adopting the sarcastic tone of an inferiority complex, or it expresses calculated indifference to spiritual teaching. In effect it says: "Our hearts and minds are not intelligent enough to understand your noble ideas, nor our ears sufficiently acute to hear their exposition: you and we are quite different; there is a gulf between us. Why worry about us? You go your way, and we shall go ours!"

6. Say thou: "I am but a man like you:(4467) It is revealed to me by Inspiration, that your Allah is one Allah. so stand true to Him, and ask for His Forgiveness."(4468) And woe to those who join gods with Allah,-

4467 The reply is in effect: that the bringer of the Message is not an angel nor a god, and so there can and ought to be no barrier between him and his hearers; but he has been chosen to bring a Message of Truth and Hope to them; they should accept the Gospel of Unity, and by Repentance obtain Allah's Grace and Forgiveness.

4468 There is nothing but pity for those who reject Truth, run after false worship, have no sympathy or charity for their fellow-men, and even deny that there is any future Life.

7. Those who practise not regular Charity, and who even deny the Hereafter.

8. For those who believe(4469) and work deeds of righteousness is a reward that will never fail.

4469 But blessed are those who have Faith. They will have a Future and a Bliss that will never fail.

9. Say: Is it that ye deny Him Who created the earth in two Days?(4470) And do ye join equals with Him? He is the Lord of (all) the Worlds.

4470 This is a difficult passage, describing the primal creation of our physical earth and the physical heavens around us. If we count the two Days mentioned in this verse, the four Days, mentioned in verse 10, and the two Days mentioned in verse 12, we get a total of eight Days, while in many passages the creation is stated to have taken place in six Days: see 7:54 , n. 1031; and 32:4, n. 3632. The Commentators understand the "four Days" in verse 10 to include the two Days in verse 9, so that the total for the universe comes to six Days. This is reasonable, because the processess described in verses 9 and 10 form really one series. In the one case it is the creation of the formless matter of the earth; in the other case it is the gradual evolution of the form of the earth, its mountains and seas, and its animal and vegetable life, with the "nourishment in due proportion", proper to each. *Cf.* also 15:19 -20.

10. He set on the (earth), mountains standing firm,(4471) high above it, and bestowed blessings on the earth, and measure therein all things to give them nourishment in due proportion, in four Days,(4472) in accordance with (the needs of) those who seek (Sustenance).(4473)

4471 *Cf.* 13:3 and 16:15 , n. 2038. *High above it:* the highest mountains are 29,000 feet above sea level, and the lowest depths of the bottom of the ocean are 31,600 feet below sea level, so that the vertical difference between the highest and lowest points on the solid crust of the earth is about 11.5 miles. The highland areas are the main sources of the water supply in all the regions of the earth, and vegetable and animal life depends on water supply.

4472 See n. 4470 above.

4473 *Sa'ilin* may mean either (1) those who seek, or (2) those who ask or enquire. If the former meaning-is adopted, the clause means that everything is apportioned to the needs and appetites of Allah's creatures, If the latter, it means that the needs of enquirers are sufficiently met by what is stated here.

11. Moreover He comprehended(4474) in His design the sky,(4475) and it had been (as) smoke: He said to it and to the earth: "Come ye together,(4476) willingly or unwillingly." They said: "We do come (together), in willing obedience."

4474 For *istawa* see n. 1386 to 10:3. *Cf.* also 2:29 .

4475 From 79:30 it would appear as if the earth was spread out after the sky was made. In the present passage the creation of the earth and the evolution of life on our globe are mentioned first; and the making of the sky into the seven firmaments is mentioned last. The two statements are not inconsistent. It is stated here that when the sky was made into seven firmaments, it had existed previously as smoke, or vapour, or steam. The idea I derive from a collation of the relevant Qur'anic passages is that Allah first created primeval matter, which was as yet without order, shape, or symmetry. This state is called Chaos as opposed to Cosmos in Greek Cosmogony. The next stage would be the condensation of this primeval matter, into gases, liquids, or solids: on this subject no precise information is given us: it belongs to the realm of Physics. About the earth we are told of four stages or Days, and about the heavens, of two stages or Days. For Days see n. 4477 below. If these stages proceeded or proceed together in time, it is obvious that each stage as we know it on earth is half as long as each stage in the heavens. But these are questions of Physics, Astronomy, or Geology, not questions of Religion.

4476 I take this to mean that Allah's design in creation was not to keep heaven and earth separate, but together, as we indeed are, being part of the solar system, and travellers through space, crossing the path of several comets. And all matter created by Allah willingly obeys the laws laid down for it.

12. So He completed them as seven firmaments in two Days,(4477) and He assigned to each heaven its duty

and command. And We adorned the lower heaven with lights, and (provided it)(4478) with guard. Such is the Decree of (Him) the Exalted in Might, Full of Knowledge.

4477 For *"Days"*, which may include thousands of years, see 7:54 , and n. 1031. They refer to stages in the evolution of physical nature. In the Biblical cosmogony, (Gen. 1, and 2:1-7), which reflects old Babylonian cosmogony, the scheme is apparently to be taken literally as to days and is as follows: the first day Allah created light; the second, the firmament; the third, the earth and vegetation; the fourth, the stars and planets; the fifth, fish and fowl from the sea; and the sixth, cattle, creeping things, beasts on land, and man; on the seventh day He ended His work and rested. Our scheme is wholly different. (1) Allah did not rest, and never rests. "His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them"; (2) Allah's work has not ended; His activity still goes on 32:5; 7:54; (3) man in our scheme does not come in with land animals; his advent is much later; (4) our stages are not sharply divided from each other, as in the above scheme, where the stars and planets having been created on the fourth day, it is not intelligible how the first three days were counted, nor how vegetation grew on the third day. Our stages for earth and heavens are not in sequence of time for the heavens and the earth. Our six stages are broadly speaking, (1) the throwing off of our planet from cosmic matter; (2) its cooling and condensing; (3) and (4) the growth of vegetable and animal life; (5) and (6) the parallel growth of the starry realm and our solar system.

4478 *Cf.* 15:17 , and n. 1951; also 37:6-9. The transition from the third person ("He completed," etc.) to the first person ("We adorned."etc.) may be noted. The act of creation is an impersonal act: the act of adornment and guarding is a personal favour to Allah's creatures.

13. But if they turn away, say thou: "I have warned you of a stunning Punishment (as of thunder and lightning)(4479) like that which (overtook) the ´Ad and the Thamud!"

4479 See verse 17. below.

14. Behold, the messengers came to them, from before them(4480) and behind them, (preaching): "Serve none but Allah." They said, "If our Lord had so pleased, He would certainly have sent down angels(4481) (to preach). Now we reject your mission (altogether)."

4480 *"From before them and behind them": i.e.,* from every side. They were warned from every point of view.

4481 *Cf. 15:7,* n.1941; 6:8-9 841-842. The 'Ad had more power and material civilisation than the Pagan Arabs contemporary with the Prophet. But the greater the material civilization, the greater the arrogance as the besetting sin.

15. Now the ´Ad behaved arrogantly through the land, against (all) truth and reason,(4482) and said: "Who is superior to us in strength?" What! did they not see that Allah, Who created them, was superior to them in strength? But they continued to reject Our Signs!

4482 *Against (all) truth and reason: Cf.* 7:33 . Their estimate of their own strength was greater than was justified by facts, but if they had all the strength which they arrogated to themselves, yet how could they stand before Allah?

16. So We sent against them a furious Wind through days(4483) of disaster, that We might give them a taste of a Penalty of humiliation in this life; but the Penalty of a Hereafter will be more humiliating still: and they will find no help.

4483 The detailed story of 'Ad and their besetting sin, and the preaching of their Prophet Hud to them will be found in 26:123-140; also 7:65-72, and n. 1040. For the furious Wind, *Cf.* 54:19.

17. As to the Thamud,(4484) We gave them Guidance, but they preferred blindness (of heart) to Guidance: so the stunning Punishment(4485) of humiliation seized them, because of what they had earned.

4484 The story of Thamud usually goes with that of 'Ad. *Cf.* 36:140-59; also 7:73-79, and n. 1043.

4485 *"The stunning Punishment": i.e.,* deafening noises like those of thunder and lightning; or the rumbling of a terrible earthquake. In 7:78, an earthquake is suggested, see n. 1047 to that verse. *Cf.* also above, 41:13.

18. But We delivered those who believed and practised righteousness.

19. On the Day that the enemies of Allah will be gathered together to the Fire, they will be marched in ranks.(4486)

4486 *"Marched in ranks":* to show their further humiliation; for they will be like prisoners going to Punishment.

20. At length, when they reach the (Fire), their hearing, their sight, and their skins(4487) will bear witness against them, as to (all) their deeds.

4487 All the members of their bodies and the faculties of their minds, which they misused, will bear witness against them. Similarly, in 36:65, their hands and their feet bear witness against them. The "skin" not only includes the sense of touch (which is so often misused in sex), but also the sense of taste and the sense of smell, which are specialised forms of the organ of touch. All the sensory organs, and all their intellectual and emotional counterparts advance us by their use and pull us down by their misuse. They become tell-tale witnesses against us if abused.

21. They will say to their skins:(4488) "Why bear ye witness against us?" They will say: "(Allah) hath given us speech,- (He) Who giveth speech to everything: He created you for the first time, and unto Him were ye to return.

4488 A new phase of their existence will now dawn on them. They used to think that if they concealed their evil deeds from the rest of the world, nothing would happen to them! But Allah can give "tongues to trees", and can make every fact in life, known and unknown to the world, contribute to the elucidation of truth and justice. "Speech" on behalf of their senses and faculties should of course be understood figuratively. When we succumb to evil, our limbs and faculties betray us.

22. "Ye did not seek(4489) to hide yourselves, lest your hearing, your sight, and your skins should bear witness against you! But ye did think that Allah knew not many of the things that ye used to do!

4489 The limbs and faculties will say: "You did not seek to hide your evil from us: in fact you used us for your evil, because we were in your power. Did you not know that Allah knew everything and that our knowledge would be evidence against you?"

23. "But this thought of yours(4490) which ye did entertain concerning your Lord, hath brought you to destruction, and (now) have ye become of those utterly lost!"

4490 'You now see the situation! We were given for your use and service. You misused us, to your own utter and irretrievable destruction!"

24. If, then, they have patience,(4491) the Fire will be a home for them! and if they beg to be received into favour, into favour will they not (then) be received.

4491 *If they have patience:* there is sarcasm in the meaning. "Let them not be impatient; they will soon find a home in the Fire of Hell! If they ask for grace and forgiveness then, it will be too late."

25. And We have destined for them intimate companions(4492) (of like nature), who made alluring to them what was before them and behind them;(4493) and the sentence among the previous generations of Jinns(4494) and men, who have passed away, is proved against them; for they are utterly lost.(4495)

4492 Just as the idea of happiness in heaven is expressed, not only by individual satisfaction, but by congenial society, so the idea of Punishment in hell is deepened by the fact that Evil will be made to meet evil: those who made sin fair-

seeming in this life will be there to share in the regrets and mutual recriminations which will make life a burden. In fact, in these Ha Mim verses, the idea of fit companionship for the Good and uncongenial company for the Evil, runs like a thread throughout. See Introduction to S. 40.

4493 They painted in glowing colours the pleasures of sin in the past and the pleasure of sin in the future, thus practising a double deception, which will now be found out.

4494 *Jinns:* see n. 929 to 6:100. All spirits of wickedness and all men who submitted to them, in the past, were under one common sentence; and future generations who embrace evil will also join them. *Cf.* 6:128.

4495 The echo here of verse 23 above completes the argument from another point of view.

26. The Unbelievers say: "Listen not to this Qur´an,(4496) but talk at random in the midst of its (reading), that ye may gain the upper hand!"

4496 A favourite trick of those who wish to dishonour Revelation is, not only not to listen to it themselves, but to talk loudly and insolently when it is being read, so that even the true listeners may not be able to perform their devotions. They think that they are drowning the voice of Allah: in fact they are piling up misery for themselves in the future. For Allah's voice can never be silenced.

27. But We will certainly give the Unbelievers a taste of a severe Penalty, and We will requite them for the worst of their deeds.(4497)

4497 Nothing that they can do, however outrageous, will escape its fit punishment. And to reject Allah's Signs is to shut the very door to His Grace and Mercy.

28. Such is the requital of the enemies of Allah,- the Fire: therein will be for them the Eternal Home: a (fit) requital, for that they were wont to reject Our Sings.

29. And the Unbelievers will say: "Our Lord! Show us those,(4498) among Jinns and men, who misled us: We shall crush them beneath our feet, so that they become the vilest (before all)."

4498 It is one of the qualities of sin and all evil, that it wishes to drag down others in its own camp, and rejoices to see them humiliated and disgraced, just as, in the opposite case, the good rejoice to help and honour others and make them happy wherever they can. *Cf.* 6:112-113.

30. In the case of those who say, "Our Lord is Allah., and, further,(4499) stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them (from time to time): "Fear ye not!" (they suggest), "Nor grieve! but receive the Glad Tidings of the Garden (of Bliss), the which ye were promised!

4499 The people who succeed in eternal Life are those who recognise and understand the one and only Eternal Reality, that is Allah, and further shape their probationary Lite firmly and steadfastly on the principles of that Truth and Reality. They will have their friends and protectors in the good angels, in contrast to the evil ones, who will have no friendship or protection, but only the reproaches of the Evil Ones.

31. "We are your protectors(4500) in this life and in the Hereafter: therein shall ye have all that your souls(4501) shall desire; therein shall ye have all that ye ask for!-

4500 *"Protectors":* a key-thought for the *Ha Mim* Surahs *Cf.* n. 4492 to 41:25 above, and n. 4505 to 41:34 below.

4501 *Cf.* 21:102, 43:71, 52:22. [Eds.].

32. "A hospitable gift from One(4502) Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!"

4502 *Cf.* 3:198. Through Allah's infinite Mercy and Forgiveness, they will now be in the position of guests to Host, and will receive unnumbered gifts out of all proportion to their own merits.

33. Who is better in speech(4503) than one who calls (men) to Allah, works righteousness, and says, "I am of those who bow in Islam"?

4503 *Better in speech: i.e.,* speaks better counsel; or is more worthy of being listened to. That his word reaches the highest mark of human speech is evidenced by three facts: (1) that he calls all to the Truth of Allah, showing that his thoughts are not centered on himself; (2) every deed of his is righteousness, showing that there is no divergence between his preaching and his conduct; and (3) he completely associates himself with the Will of Allah, showing that he is the full embodiment of Islam. What a fine description of the Prophet!

34. Nor can goodness and Evil(4504) be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!(4505)

4504 You do not *return* good for evil, for there is no equality or comparison between the two. You repel or destroy evil with something which is far better, just as an antidote is better than poison. You foil hatred with love. You repel ignorance with knowledge, folly and wickedness with the friendly message of Revelation. The man who was in the bondage of sin, you not only liberate from sin, but make him your greatest friend and helper in the cause of Allah! Such is the alchemy of the Word of Allah! *(Cf.* 23:96, 28:54, and 42:40).

4505 *Hamim:* the keyword of the *Ha Mim* Surahs. See n. 4500 above, and Introduction to S. 40.

35. And no one will be(4506) granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint,- none but persons of the greatest good fortune.

4506 The moral standard referred to in the last verse can only be reached by the exercise of the highest patience and self-restraint All sorts of human weaknesses and counsels of pseudo-wisdom and "self-respect" will keep breaking in, but resist them as suggestions of Evil (see next verse). If you reach anywhere near that high standard, you will be indeed most fortunate in a spiritual sense, for Allah's Revelation will have made you great and free.

36. And if (at any time) an incitement to discord(4507) is made to thee by the Evil One, seek refuge in Allah. He is the One Who hears and knows all things.

4507 *Nazagha has* in it the idea of discord, slander, disharmony, as well as incitements to such disturbances in the soul. They can only proceed from evil, and should be resisted with the help of Allah. See also last note.

37. Among His Sings are(4508) the Night and the Day, and the Sun and the Moon. Adore not the sun and the moon, but adore Allah, Who created them, if it is Him ye wish to serve.

4508 Night and Day are opposites, and yet, by the alchemy of Allah, they can both subserve the purpose of human good, because the Night can give rest while the Day can promote activity. The Sun and the Moon are similarly complementary. So, in moral and spiritual affairs, seeming opposites may by Allah's alchemy be made to subserve the purposes of Good. They are but instruments: Allah is the Cause. Adore Allah, and not the things which He has created. Use the things which He has created, but do not adore them.

38. But is the (Unbelievers) are arrogant, (no matter):(4509) for in the presence of thy Lord are those who celebrate His praises by night and by day. And they never flag (nor feel themselves above it).

4509 It does not in any way affect Allah if men rebel against Him. It is men's own loss. Allah's glory is being celebrated night and day by angels and men who receive the privilege of approaching His presence. To them it is a delight and an honour to be in the sunshine of Truth and Happiness.

39. And among His Signs in this: thou seest the earth barren and desolate;(4510) but when We send down rain to it, it is stirred to life and yields increase. Truly, He Who gives life(4511) to the (dead) earth can surely give life to (men) who are dead. For He has power over all things.

4510 Evil makes of the souls of men what drought makes of land: it kills life, beauty, and fruitfulness. Allah's Word in the spiritual world has the same wonderful effect as rain has on barren land; it gives life, beauty, and fruitfulness. And the effect of Allah's Word is also seen through the lives of men who repel evil with what is better. They also convert dead souls (which harbour spite and hatred) into living souls, which come into the main current of spiritual life, and help in carrying out Allah's beneficent Purpose.

4511 Why should we wonder then at the potency of Allah's Word, whether in our probationary lives here, or in the eternal life of the Hereafter.

40. Those who pervert(4512) the Truth in Our Signs are not hidden from Us. Which is better?- he that is cast into the Fire, or he that comes safe through, on the Day of Judgment? Do what ye will: verily He seeth (clearly) all that ye do.

4512 *Pervert the Truth in Our Signs:* either by corrupting the scriptures or turning them to false and selfish uses; or by neglecting the Signs of Allah in nature around them, or silencing His voice in their own conscience. Everything is known to Allah. Why not work for true salvation at the final Judgement?

41. Those who reject the Message(4513) when it comes to them (are not hidden from Us). And indeed it is a Book of exalted power.

4513 Mere rejection by men will not silence the Signs of Allah, which will work unintermittently and with the fullest potency.

42. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it:(4514) It is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise.

4514 Allah's Truth is fully guarded on all sides. No one can get the better of it by attacking it from before or behind it, openly or secretly, or in any way whatever.

43. Nothing is said to thee that was not said to the messengers before thee:(4515) that thy lord has at his Command (all) forgiveness as well as a most Grievous Penalty.

4515 The gist of Allah's Message, now, before, and for ever, is the same: Mercy to the erring and repentant; just punishment to those who wilfully rebel against Allah.

44. Had We sent this as a Qur´an (in the language)(4516) other than Arabic, they would have said: "Why are not its verses explained in detail? What! (a Book) not in Arabic and (a Messenger an Arab?" Say: "It is a Guide and a Healing to those who believe; and for those who believe not, there is a deafness in their ears,(4517) and it is blindness in their (eyes): They are (as it were) being called from a place far distant!"

4516 ***Cf.* 16:103-105; 12:2; etc. It was most natural and reasonable that the Messenger being Arab, the Message should be in his own tongue, that he might explain it in every detail, with the greatest power and eloquence. Even though it was to be for the whole world, its initial exposition was thus to be in Arabic. But if people had no faith and were spiritually deaf or blind, it would not matter in what language it came.**

4517 *Cf.* 41:5, and 6:25 . They pretended that it was too deep for them, when they meant that they were superior to it! The fact was that by putting themselves in an artificially false position, they rendered themselves impervious to the Message. The voice of Revelation or the voice of conscience sounded to them as if it came from a far-off place! They themselves made themselves strangers to it.

45. We certainly gave Moses the Book aforetime: but disputes arose therein. Had it not been for a Word(4518) that went forth before from thy Lord, (their differences) would have been settled between them: but they remained in suspicious disquieting doubt thereon.

4518 Callousness and self-sufficiency in religion are often illustrated by sects like the Pharisees and Sadducees among the Jews. Where there are honest differences of opinion, they can, in Allah's Plan, lead to greater enquiry and emulation. Where the differences are fractious, there is often even then time left for repentance. In any case the Word or Decree of Allah is for the best good of all, and should not disturb Faith. *Cf.* 10:19 . A good life, of faith and truth, is in our own interests, and the opposite against our own interests. Allah is never unjust.

46. Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul: nor is thy Lord ever unjust (in the least) to His Servants.

47. To Him is referred(4519) the Knowledge of the Hour (of Judgment: He knows all): No date-fruit comes out of its sheath, nor does a female conceive (within her womb) nor bring forth the Day that (Allah) will propound to them the (question),(4520) "Where are the partners (ye attributed to Me?" They will say, "We do assure thee not one of us can bear witness!"

4519 There are profound mysteries which the knowledge of man cannot fathom but which are all open knowledge to Allah, because He plans, guides and controls all things. The precise time of the Hour of Judgement is one of these. We are not to dispute about matters like these, which are matters of speculation as far as human intelligence is concerned. Such speculations ruined the Ummah of Moses, and set them on the arid path of doubts and controversies. Our task is to do our duty and love Allah and man (see the last two verses). *Cf.* also 21:4.

4520 When the final restoration of true values comes, all falsehood will be exposed openly and publicly. The false gods will vanish, and their falsehood will be acknowledged by those who had lapsed from true worship. But it will be too late then for repentance.

48. The (deities) they used to invoke aforetime will leave them in the lurch, and they will perceive that they have no way of escape.

49. Man does not weary(4521) of asking for good (things), but if ill touches him, he gives up all hope (and) is lost in despair.

4521 Not only is man prone to doubts and speculations in matters beyond his ken, thus disturbing the even tenor of his spiritual life: he is apt to run into opposite extremes in his daily experiences in this life. He is always hankering after the good things of this life. They are not all good for him. If he receives a little check, even though it may be to bring him to his bearings and turn his thoughts to higher things, he is apt to fall into despair.

50. When we give him a taste(4522) of some Mercy from Ourselves, after some adversity has touched him, he is sure to say, "This is due to my (merit): I think not that the Hour (of Judgment) will (ever) be established; but if I am brought back to my Lord, I have (much) good (stored) in His sight!" But We will show the Unbelievers the truth of all that they did, and We shall give them the taste of a severe Penalty.

4522 When men entertain false ideas of values in life, there are two or three possible attitudes they may adopt in reaction to their experiences. In the first place, their desire may be inordinate for the good things of this life, and any little check brings them into a mood of despair. See last note. In the second place, if their desire is granted, they are puffed up, and think that everything is due to their own cleverness or merit, and they forget Allah. Not only that, but they go a step further, and begin to doubt a Hereafter at all! If by chance they have a faint glimmering of the Hereafter, which they cannot help recognising, they think themselves "favoured of Heaven", because of some small favours given to them in this life by way of trial. Thus they turn all things, good or evil, away from their real purpose, because they are devoted to falsehood.

51. When We bestow favours(4523) on man, he turns away, and gets himself remote on his side (instead of(4524) coming to Us); and when evil seizes him, (he comes) full of prolonged prayer!

4523 The last verse and note dealt with men's distortion of the values of life. Here we come to men's ingratitude and hypocrisy. If they receive good, they go farther away from Allah, instead of coming nearer to him. If they suffer ill, they call on Allah and offer prolonged prayers, but it is not sincere devotion and therefore worthless.

4524 *Cf.* 17:83.

52. Say: "See ye if(4524-A) the (Revelation) is (really) from Allah, and yet do ye reject it? Who is more astray than one who is in a schism(4524-B) far (from any purpose)?"

4524-A An argument is now addressed, of a most searching nature. Examine your own souls. See if you do not really find something unusual in Allah's Revelation! If you do, and yet you reject it, what a terrible responsibility fastens itself on you? Could anything be more foolish or more misguided than to reject a Message which is transforming the whole world?

4524-B "If you resist the convictions of the whole world, you are only forming a Cave or a narrow obscure sect or schism, which serves no purpose, and is unfit to live in the broad light of Universal Religion.' *Cf.* 2:176, n. 176.

53. Soon will We show them our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth), and(4524-C) in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things?

4524-C 4524-C

54. Ah indeed! Are they in doubt concerning the Meeting with their Lord?(4525) Ah indeed! It is He that doth encompass all things!

4525 Short-sighted people may like to think that there may be no Judgement But Judgement is inevitable and cannot be escaped, for Allah "doth encompass all things."



42. Al Shura (Consultation)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Ha Mim(4526)

4526 See Introduction to S. 40, paragraphs 2-4.

2. ´Ain. Sin. Qaf.(4527)

4527 This Surah has a double set of Abbreviated Letters, one in the first verse, and one in this second verse. No authoritative explanation of this second set is available, and I refrain from speculation. See Appendix I.

3. Thus doth (He) send inspiration to thee as (He did) to those before thee,-(4528) Allah, Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

4528 Inspiration is full of Power and Wisdom, and both these qualities are derived from the Power and Wisdom of Allah. Unlike human power, this Power is necessarily good and merciful; unlike human wisdom, this Wisdom is necessarily complete and indisputable.

4. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: and He is Most High, Most Great.(4529)

4529 We cannot conceive the distance which separates the Most High from the highest of His creatures. Allah Most Great from the greatest of the beings that we can imagine. The highest heavens are mentioned in the next verse, as well as the noblest creatures that we can imagine, the angels.

5. The heavens are almost rent asunder from above them(4530) (by Him Glory): and the angels celebrate the Praises of their Lord, and pray for forgiveness for (all) beings on earth:(4531) Behold! Verily Allah is He, the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

4530 How can we conceive of sublimity and greatness in a higher degree than this, that the highest heavens are almost ready to burst asunder by His Glory, which is higher than all?

4531 The angels are the noblest and purest beings of whom we can conceive. They reflect on the one side Allah's Glory and Praise, and on the other, two other attributes of Allah, that look towards His erring creatures, *viz.:* Forgiveness and Mercy. The two sets of attributes are complementary. They thus proclaim in their own being and in their prayers the Greatness and unbounded Goodness of Allah.

6. And those who take as protectors others besides Him,-(4532) Allah doth watch over them; and thou art not the disposer of their affairs.

4532 We now come to the contrast, the folly and ingratitude of man. But that cannot escape its final doom in the Universal Plan of Allah. Only J udgement rests with Allah. A Prophet is not responsible for the conduct of men, in a system which permits some limited free will and personal responsibility.

7. Thus have We sent by inspiration to thee an Arabic Qur´an:(4533) that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities(4534) and all around her,- and warn (them) of the Day of Assembly, of which there is no doubt: (when) some will be(4535) in the Garden, and some in the Blazing Fire.

4533 The point of the Qur'an being in Arabic is that it is plain and intelligible to the people through whom and among whom it was promulgated; see next clause.

4534 The City of Makkah . See n. 913 to 6:92. This is undoubtedly a Makkan verse. Even apart from the Qiblah, Makkah is the centre of Islam, and "all around her" is the whole world.

4535 The contrast is again emphasised, as explained in the Summary.

8. If Allah had so willed,(4536) He could have made them a single people; but He admits whom He will to His Mercy; and the Wrong-doers will have no protector nor helper.

4536 *Cf.* 5:48 , and n. 761. It is one of the Signs of Allah that He has made us different, that we may be tried in the exercise of our will, and that we may reach, through righteousness and Faith, our highest development, and enjoy His gifts of Mercy and Grace. But we must not become contentious, and fall into evil: we must understand our own limitations. Otherwise we shall lose His grace and protection.

9. What! Have they taken (for worship) protectors besides Him? But it is Allah,- He is the Protector,(4537) and it is He Who gives life to the dead: It is He Who has power over all things,

4537 There can be no greater ingratitude or blasphemy than to worship false gods, or to seek protection from things that have no power, when Allah—Who has power over all things—is always seeking to protect and cherish His creatures, and placing in their way all the means for attaining the best in them.

10. Whatever it be wherein ye differ, the decision thereof is with Allah.(4538) such is Allah my Lord: In Him I trust, and to Him I turn.

4538 In the highest issues of life men may see things differently. If their differences arise merely from selfish motives, or narrowness of vision, they are sinning against their own souls. If their differences arise from sincere but mistaken notions, their proper course is not to form divisions and sects, or to increase contention and hatred among men, but to leave all things to Allah, trusting in Him and turning to Him in all difficulties. The final decision in all things is with Him.

11. (He is) the Creator of the heavens and the earth: He has made for you pairs from among yourselves, and pairs among cattle:(4539) by this means does He multiply you: there is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is the One that hears and sees (all things).

4539 The mystery of sex has not only its physical aspects, but its moral and spiritual aspects, and therefore mankind is in this respect differentiated from the lower animals, and among mankind the grades and qualities are suggested by the phrase *"from among yourselves"*. As regards cattle, they are specially mentioned among the animals, as having special relations with man and specially subserving his needs, not only in the physical sphere, but also in the matter of transport, which is the key to all civilisation and culture: *Cf.* 36:71-73; also 23:21-22, where they are compared to ships, the symbol of international intercourse.

12. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth: He enlarges and restricts.(4540) The Sustenance to whom He will: for He knows full well all things.

4540 *"Sustenance"*, here as elsewhere, stands for all things that support every phase of life, physical, social, intellectual, or spiritual. *Cf.* 10:59 , n. 1447. The source of all gifts is Allah; His bounty is inexhaustible, and He gives to all; but He does not give to all in the same measure, because, out of the fullness of His knowledge and wisdom, He can judge best what is best for any of His creatures (see also n. 4554 and n. 4740).

13. The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah -(4541) the which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein:(4542) to those who worship other things than Allah, hard is the (way) to which thou callest them.(4543) Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him).

4541 Allah's Religion is the same in essence, whether given, for example, to Noah, Abraham, Moses, or Jesus, or to our Prophet. The source of unity is the revelation from Allah. In Islam it is "established" as an institution, and does not remain merely a vague suggestion.

4542 Faith, Duty, or Religion, is not a matter to dispute about. The formation of sects is against the very principle of Religion and Unity. What we should strive for is steadfastness in duty and faith, and unity among mankind.

4543 Unity, unselfishness, love for Allah and man—these things are inconsistent with selfish aggrandizement, unjust suppression of our fellow-creatures, false worship, and false conduct to our brethren. Hence the Gospel of Unity, though it is in complete accord with the pure pattern after which Allah made us, is yet hard to those who love self and falsehood. But Grace is free to all, and in His wise Plan. He will specially select Teachers to show the Way to humanity, and no one who turns to Him will lack guidance.

14. And they became divided(4544) only after Knowledge reached them,- through selfish envy as between themselves. Had it not been for a Word that went forth before(4545) from thy Lord, (tending) to a Term appointed, the matter would have been settled between them: But truly those who have inherited the Book after them are in suspicious (disquieting)(4546) doubt concerning it.

4544 *Cf.* 2:213. If you reject Truth after it has reached you, it can only be through selfish contumacy or envy.

4545 *Cf.* 10:19 , and n. 1407. Allah's decree has allowed a certain Term during which a sinner has the chance of repentance and forgiveness. Were it not so, sin would be punished at once, and the matter would be decided straightaway. So also, when people reject Truth from selfish or contumacious motives, they get rope: perchance they may repent.

4546 *Cf.* 14:9 and n. 1884. "Those who have inherited the Book" are the People of the Book, of the ages since the Book or Revelation came to them. Referring to the Jews and Christians contemporary with our Prophet, how true it is that they were broken up into hostile sects which hated and persecuted each other! Islam came to unite them, and it did. For the present phases of Christianity and Judaism are of later growth.

15. Now then, for that (reason),(4547) call (them to the Faith), and stand steadfast as thou art commanded, nor follow thou their vain desires; but say: "I believe in the Book which Allah has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you. Allah is our Lord(4548) and your Lord: for us (is the responsibility for) our deeds, and for you for your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is (our) Final Goal.

4547 How beautifully the mission of Islam is commended in this verse! (1) the more sectarianism and division there is in the world, the more need is there for the Gospel of Unity. (2) It must steadfastly pursue its way. (3) It must not be deflected by wordly or political motives. (4) Its faith must be directly in Allah and in Allah's Revelation. "The Book", mentioned here, covers all the revelations sent by Allah to His prophets. (5) It must judge justly between warring factions, as the Religion of Peace and Unity.

4548 The mission of Islam is further described. (6) The God whom it preaches is not an exclusive God: He is the Lord of the Worlds: to any given person, of whatever faith, 'He is your Allah, as well as mine' (7) Our faith is not a question of words; it is deeds which decide; each one of us has personal responsibility for his own conduct. (8) There is no cause of contention whatever, when we preach Unity, Truth, and the Hereafter. (9) If you have doubts, the final arbiter is Allah, and His Throne is our Goal.

16. But those who dispute concerning Allah after He has been accepted,-(4549) futile is their dispute in the Sight of their Lord: on them will be a Penalty terrible.

4549 *After He has been accepted.* The disputants are the Unbelievers who pugnaciously assault the minds of Believers after the Believers have by conviction accepted Faith in Allah as leading to spiritual Light. Such disputation is futile. An inner spiritual experience can never be shaken by dialectical assaults. On the contrary such disputations recoil on the heads of those who indulge in them. Allah's Wrath is on them in this life, and the terrible Penalty of the Hereafter must inevitably follow their evil plots against Truth.

17. It is Allah Who has sent down the Book in Truth, and the Balance(4550) (by which to weigh conduct). And what will make thee realise that perhaps the Hour is close at hand?

4550 Revelation is like a balance, an instrument placed by Allah in our hands, by which we can weigh all moral issues, all questions of right and wrong in conduct. We must do so constantly. For the Judgement in any given case may come at any time: it may be quite near, and we must always be prepared. The Balance may also refer to the God-given faculty by which man can judge between right and wrong.

18. Only those wish to(4551) hasten it who believe not in it: those who believe hold it in awe, and know that it is the Truth. Behold, verily those that dispute concerning the Hour are far astray.

4551 The Unbelievers do not believe in Judgement and laugh at it. They say defiantly, "If there is to be a punishment, let it come at once!" The threefold answer to this will be found in n. 1810 to 13:6. With those who believe, the case is different. They know that the Hereafter is an awful Reality, and prepare for it. They see clearly on what a wrong track the scoffers are!

19. Gracious is Allah(4552) to His servants:(4553) He gives Sustenance(4554) to whom He pleases: and He has power and can carry out His Will.

4552 *Latif:* so kind, gracious, and understanding, as to bestow gifts finely suited to the needs of the recipients. For the various meaning of *Latif,* see n. 2844 to 22:63. *Cf.* also 12:100.

4553 "Servants" here seems to include all men, just and unjust, for Allah provided for them all *(Cf.* 42:7, 50:29, and 51:56).

4554 *Sustenance, i.e.,* provision for all needs, physical, moral, spiritual, etc. *"To whom He pleases"* is not restrictive, but modal. 'Allah provides for all, but His provision is according to His wise Will and Plan, and not according to people's extravagant demands.' He can provide for all, because He has complete power and can carry out His Will. A further comment will be found in the next verse *(Cf. n.* 4540 and n. 4740).

20. To any that desires the tilth of the Hereafter, We give increase in his tilth, and to any that desires the tilth of this world, We grant somewhat thereof, but he(4555) has no share or lot in the Hereafter.

4555 The parable is from the efforts of the husbandman, who ploughs and prepares the soil, saws the seed, weeds in due season, and reaps the harvest. You reap as you sow. But Allah will add manifold advantages for spiritual tilth. To those who are only engrossed in the vanities of this world, something may accrue in this world, but the spiritual world is closed to them.

21. What! have they partners(4556) (in godhead), who have established for them some religion without the permission of Allah. Had it not been for the Decree of Judgment, the matter would have been decided between them (at once). But verily the Wrong- doers will have a grievous Penalty.

4556 Nothing can exist without the permission of Allah. Can people, who indulge in false worship say: "Why does Allah permit it?" The answer is: "a certain latitude is allowed with the grant of a limited form of free will. When the time for Judgement comes, the Punishment is sure." See n. 1810 to 13:6. *Decree (or Word) of Judgement.* See n. 1407 to 10:19.

22. Thou wilt see the wrongdoers(4557) in fear on account of what they have earned, and (the burden of) that must (necessarily) fall on them. But those who believe and work righteous deeds will be in the luxuriant meads(4558) of the Gardens: they shall have, before their Lord, all that they wish for. That will indeed be the magnificent Bounty (of Allah..

4557 The chief feature of the punishment of wrongdoing is that the minds of the wrongdoers are haunted with terror on account of their own guilty conscience. They cannot possibly escape the weight of that terror.

4558 In contrast with the withering terror of the wrongdoers is the ease and rational happiness of those who do good. "On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (2:38). Their wills will have been purified, and they shall have all that they shall desire, "before their Lord". That is, their highest Bliss will be the sight of their Lord. No higher Bounty can they wish for.

23. That is (the Bounty) whereof(4559) Allah gives Glad Tidings to His Servants who believe and do righteous deeds. Say: "No reward do I ask of you for this except the love of those near of kin."(4560) And if any one earns any good, We shall give him an increase of good in respect thereof: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready(4561) to appreciate (service).

4559 Heaven may be pictured to our minds in various forms. This is one of the highest, and Allah announces it freely to the righteous.

4560 No sort of tangible reward does the man of God ask for proclaiming the Glad Tidings of Allah. But at least he has the right to ask that his kith and kin should not persecute him and put all sorts of obstacles in his way, as did the Quraysh against the Prophet. The love of kindred may be extended to mean the love of our common humanity, for all mankind are brothers descended from Adam. Everyone can understand the ordinary love of kindred. (R).

4561 *Cf.* 35:29-30, and notes 3915 (for increase) and 3917 (for Allah's appreciation of service).

24. What! Do they say, "He has forged a falsehood against Allah.? But if Allah willed, He could seal up(4562) thy heart. And Allah blots out Vanity, and proves the Truth by His Words. For He knows well the secrets of all hearts.

4562 If anyone has a doubt about a prophet's mission, let him look at the prophet's life, at his work, at his character. Allah loves Truth, not Falsehood. Allah's aid goes with Truth, not with Falsehood. The beauty and power of Allah's Word cannot be found in Falsehood. The false man's heart would be sealed, not expanded to new heights, as is that of the Message-bearer of Allah.

25. He is the One that accepts(4563) repentance from His Servants and forgives sins: and He knows all that ye do.

4563 Whatever the sin. Allah's Mercy is open to sincere Repentance, at all times, until the decree of condemnation issues.

26. And He listens to(4564) those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, and gives them increase of His Bounty: but for the Unbelievers their is a terrible Penalty.

4564 To the prayers of the righteous He listens, and He gives them of His Bounty beyond their deserts. Every time they do a little good, they are increased in their goodness. Every right impulse or aspiration is strengthened and leads to progressive spiritual advancement.

27. If Allah were to enlarge(4565) the provision for His Servants, they would indeed transgress beyond all bounds through the earth; but he sends (it) down in due measure as He pleases.(4566) For He is with His Servants Well-acquainted, Watchful.

4565 It may be objected that all prayers, even of good people, are not answered. The reply is: (1) that even everyone who is good does not necessarily know what is best for him, for the values in this life are curiously distorted; and (2) on account of their want of knowledge, if everyone got all he asked for, there would be chaos and confusion, and "transgression beyond bounds through the earth", for the different interests are so intermingled and balanced that some measure must be observed in granting people's wishes. This measure is best supplied by the watchful care of Allah and His perfect knowledge of all our real needs.

4566 *As He pleases* is here almost equivalent to *as He thinks best.*

28. He is the One that sends down rain (even) after (men) have given up all hope,(4567) and scatters His Mercy (far and wide). And He is the Protector, Worthy of all Praise.

4567 That men should get such a blessing as rain when they expect it according to ordinary calculations of probabilities does not impress them, as it is a daily occurrence. But Allah's mercy is more than this. It comes to our aid even when all hope is lost, and gives us new chances and new openings where we least expect them. His quality of cherishing and protecting His creatures is always active, and what higher praise can we give?

29. And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the living creatures(4568) that He has scattered through them:(4569) and He has power to gather them together when He wills.

4568 *Dabbatun:* beasts, living, crawling creatures of all kinds: see n. 166 to 2:164. Similarly in 24:45, and other passages, the word is used for living creatures of all kinds, life generally, whose material basis is the mysterious thing which science calls protoplasm. The more our biological knowledge increases, the more do we marvel at the unity of Life on the one hand, and its diversity on the other.

4569 Life is not confined to our one little planet. It is a very old speculation to imagine some life like human life on the planet Mars. Though no scientific demonstration is possible, it is reasonable to suppose that life in some form or other is scattered through some of the millions of heavenly bodies scattered through space. What wonderful Sign of Allah! the Almighty Who created such countless beings has surely the power to bring them together.

30. Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because on the things your hands(4570) have wrought, and for many (of them) He grants forgiveness.

4570 All evil, all sorrow, all pain and affliction, are things not normal, things twisted from the pure and holy nature as created by Allah's hands. As far as man is concerned, his misfortunes are but the consequences of the things he has done, He must bear personal responsibility for them and not throw the blame on others.

31. Nor can ye frustrate (aught), (fleeing) through the earth;(4571) nor have ye, besides Allah, any one to protect or to help.

4571 Every evil deed or word or thought must have its evil consequences: but if Allah forgives anything-and He forgives much-let no one imagine that he has defeated-or can defeat-Allah's Will or Plan. The only help or protection that is possible is from Allah. *Cf.* 29:22.

32. And among His Signs are the ships, smooth-running(4572) through the ocean, (tall) as mountains.

4572 The great and stately ships are appealed to again and again as being among the Signs of Allah, from many aspects. The aspect referred to here is how the great sailing ship runs prosperously as long as "the breath of heaven fill the sail", and what a miserable helpless creature she becomes when she once becomes becalmed. Students of English literature will remember the striking picture which Coleridge draws in his "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The becalmed ship is as it were in the grip of Death because of the crime which the sailor had committed, and his mind feels psychologically the full force of the Sign. By analogy we can apply this to other craft: the steamer is not free from other dangers of the sea, nor aircraft from numerous dangers of the air.

33. If it be His Will He can still the Wind: then would they become motionless on the back of the (ocean). Verily in this are Signs for everyone who patiently(4573) perseveres and is grateful.

4573 If we study such Signs in the right spirit, we learn the highest lessons for our spiritual life: on the one hand, patient perseverance with reliance on Allah, and on the other a feeling or attitude of grateful thanks to Allah, that He enables us to achieve so much in spite of our shortcomings, and forgives in us so much that deserves punishment and disaster.

34. Or He can cause them to perish because of the (evil) which (the men) have earned; but much doth He forgive.

35. But let those know, who(4574) dispute about Our Signs, that there is for them no way of escape.

4574 If we treat Allah's Signs in the wrong spirit, *i.e.,* contumaciously reject them or constantly dispute about them instead of trying to understand them, we are told that such tactics will avail us nothing: we cannot escape the consequences of our sins. The only way to escape is by repentance on our part and the grant of mercy by Allah.

36. Whatever ye are given (here) is (but) a convenience(4575) of this life: but that which is with Allah is better and more lasting: (it is) for those who believe(4576) and put their trust in their Lord:

4575 Any good (or ill) which is our lot is only a temporary phase to serve the convenience of this life, But there is a higher good, which comes from Allah's own Presence. Such good is both superior in quality, and more permanent. In the same way, any ills that we may suffer in this life, have reference only to the conditions of this our life of probation. The ills that we "earn" in our spiritual Life-such as deprivation of Allah's Grace—are far more momentous and permanent.

4576 The higher and more permanent gifts which come from Allah's Presence are for those who truly worship and serve Allah. These are described by nine of their characteristics: *viz.* (1) they have Faith: and it follows that (2) they trust in Allah, instead of running after false standards or values: (3) they eschew the more serious offences against Allah's Law, and of course keep clear of any offences against sex ("shameful deeds"); (4) while knowing that they are not themselves perfect, they are ready to forgive others, even though they are sorely tried with anger and provocation; for the rest see n. 4578.

37. Those who avoid the greater(4577) crimes and shameful deeds, and, when they are angry even then forgive;

4577 Here we are speaking of the ordinary man or woman who tries to follow Allah's Law: he or she is not perfect, but at least eschews the major breaches of conduct. For those higher in spiritual degree there is of course a stricter standard. But all are entitled to the blessing of Islam, whatever their degree.

38. Those who hearken(4578) to their Lord, and establish regular Prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation;(4579) who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance;

4578 Continuing the enumeration of the characteristics described in n. 4576. above, we have the following further qualities in those who wish to serve Allah. (5) They are ready at all times to hearken to Allah's Signs, or to listen to the admonitions of prophets of Allah, and to follow the true Path, as they understand it: (6) they keep personal contact with Allah, by habits of Prayer and Praise; (7) their conduct in life is open and determined by mutual Consultation between those who are entitled to a voice, *e.g.,* in private domestic affairs, as between husband and wife, or other responsible members of the household: in affairs of business, as between partners or parties interested: and in State affairs, as between rulers and ruled, or as between different departments of administration, to reserve the unity of administration: (8) they do not forget Charity, or the help due to their weaker brethren, out of the wealth or gifts or talents or opportunities, which Allah had provided for themselves: and (9) when other people use them despitefully, they are not cowed down or terrorised into submission and acceptance of evil, but stand up for their rights within the limits mentioned in verse 40. (R).

4579 *Consultation.* This is the keyword of the Surah, and suggests the ideal way in which a good man should conduct his affairs, so that, on the one hand, he may not become too egotistical, and, on the other, he may not lightly abandon the responsibilities which devolve on him as a Personality whose development counts in the sight of Allah. See the points in head (7) under n. 4578 above. This principle was applied to its fullest extent by the Prophet in his private and public life, and was fully acted upon by the early rulers of Islam. Modern representative government is an attempt-by no means perfect-to apply this principle in State affairs. See my *Religion Polity of Islam,*

39. And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves.(4580)

4580 This follows from the high value attached to an individual soul's Personality in Islam. *Cf.* last note. There are four possible situations that may arise: an individual may have to stand up against an oppressor (1) for his own trampled rights, or (2) for the rights of other within his ken; or (3) a community may have similarly to stand up for its own rights collectively; or (4) for the rights of others. Nos. 2, 3. and 4 are considered highly meritorious for all, though few have the courage or the spirit to rise to so high a standard. No. 1 is specially liable to abuse on account of man's selfishness; Nos. 2, 3 and 4 are also abused by men pretending to motives of public good when they are serving their own personal interests or idiosyncrasies; hence the qualifications mentioned in the next four verses and the notes thereto.

40. The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto(4581) (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due(4582) from Allah. for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong.(4583)

4581 See last note. When you stand up for rights, either on private or public grounds, it may be through processes of law, or by way of private defence insofar as the law permits private action, but in all cases you must not seek a compensation greater than the injury suffered. The most you can do is to demand equal redress. *i.e.* a harm equivalent to the harm done to you. Even this may serve to curb your unregenerate soul, or a community bent on revenge. But the ideal mode is not to slake your thirst for vengeance, but to follow better ways leading to the reform of the offender or his reconciliation. See 41:34, and 23:96. You can take steps to prevent repetition, by physical or moral means; the best moral means would be to turn hatred into friendship by forgiveness and love. In that case the compensation or reward (if we must use such terms) is infinitely greater, for it wins the good pleasure of Allah.

But this active righting of wrongs, whether by physical or by moral or spiritual means, which are commended as better, is an antithesis to the monkish doctrine, when you are smitten on one cheek, to turn the other also. This would not suppress, but encourage wrongdoing. It is practised by none but poltroons, and is preached only by hypocrites, or men who want to make slaves or others by

depriving them of the power of self-defence. It occurs in two of the four canonical Gospels (Matt. 5:39 , and Luke 6:29), but we need not therefore assume that it was preached by Jesus.

4582 To love Allah is the highest motive of our conduct, for it leads to the love of Allah's creatures; to win the approbation and love of Allah, is the highest reward, far transcending any compensation or satisfaction we can obtain in this life.

4583 Allah does not love those who do wrong. If, therefore, we tolerate wrong, or encourage wrong by allowing it to run rampant when we can prevent it, we fail in our duty to Allah.

41. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong (done) to them, against such(4584) there is no cause of blame.

4584 Such people are not to be blamed, though they are following the lower law. The blame is on those who arrogantly ride roughshod over the land, oppressing people with grievous wrong. See next verse.

42. The blame is only(4585) against those who oppress men and wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice: for such there will be a penalty grievous.

4585 The fact that men seek the lower rather than the higher Law is itself a result of arrogant wrongdoing of which the type was the Pharaoh who claimed to be "your Lord Most High" and oppressed the Israelites, and kept his own people under slavery and subjection, and the false glamour of magic and deception.

43. But indeed if any show patience and forgive,(4586) that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs.

4586 It is harder to be patient and forgive, and yet to get wrongs righted, as was done by the Prophet, than to bluster about and "punish the guilty" or "teach them lessons". It may look like futility or lack of purpose, but in reality it is the highest and noblest form of courage and resolution. And it may carry out the purpose of reform and the suppression of evil even better than stern punishment. The gentleness of innocence often "persuades where stronger measures fail," But of course circumstances alter cases, and there is some allowance also to be made for the personal equation of the men you have to deal with: in some cases severity may be called for, but it should be from a strict judicial motive, and not merely from personal anger or spite or lower motive in disguise.

44. For any whom Allah leaves astray, there is no protector thereafter. And thou wilt see the Wrong-doers, when in sight of the Penalty, Say: "Is there any way(4587) (to effect) a return?"

4587 When the actual consequences of evil are in sight, the foolish sinner wishes that it were possible to get back to the life of probation. But he neglected or abused it and rejected Allah's Grace all the time. How can he then be restored to a closed chapter of his life?

45. And thou wilt see them brought forward to the (Penalty), in a humble frame of mind because of (their) disgrace,(4588) (and) looking with a stealthy glance. And the Believers will say: "Those are indeed(4589) in loss, who have given to perdition their own selves and those belonging to them on the Day of Judgment. Behold! Truly the Wrong-doers are in a lasting Penalty!"

4588 They were very arrogant in their probationary life. Now will they be humbled to the dust. And they will be in utter despair and misery. They will not be able to see the favours and good things of the other life *(Cf.* 20:124-126). Even their misery, which will face them as a terrible Reality, they will only be able to look at askance, so thoroughly cowed will be their spirit.

4589 This will be their thought, and their realised experience: 'after all, any troubles and sorrows, any persecutions and taunts which they suffered in the life of probation from the enemies of truth, were of no consequence; the real loss was that revealed at the Judgement at the restoration of true values; the wicked and the arrogant have lost their own souls, and have brought to perdition all who attached themselves to them and followed their evil ways; and this Penalty is one that will endure! How much more real it is!'

46. And no protectors have they(4590) to help them, other than Allah. And for any whom Allah leaves to stray, there is no way (to the Goal).

4590 The argument begun in verse 44 above is here rounded off. If once men finally cut themselves off from Allah's guidance and care, they will have no protection whatever. All their false objects of worship will only mislead them further and further. How they will wish the fact blotted out when they are in sight of Judgement, and vainly wish for time to be reversed! They will be in the Fire, while the men whom they despised and rejected will have reached the final Goal! For them there will be no such way!'

47. Hearken ye to your Lord, before there come a Day which there will be no putting back, because(4591) of (the Ordainment of) Allah. that Day there will be for you no place of refuge nor will there be for you any room for denial(4592) (of your sins)!

4591 The Day of Judgement is inevitable. Allah has ordained it, and it cannot in any way be put back.

4592 At Judgement no one can escape the consequences of his crimes or deeds. And no one can disavow them or deny them, or by any chance pretend that they do not apply to him.

48. If then they run away, We have not sent thee as a guard over them.(4593) Thy duty is but to convey (the Message). And truly, when We give man a taste of a Mercy(4594) from Ourselves, he doth exult thereat, but when some ill happens to him, on account of the deeds which his hands have sent forth, truly then is man ungrateful!

4593 The warning is now given, that men may repent and do good, and pray for Allah's Mercy and Grace. If the warning is not heeded or is rejected, the prophet of Allah is not responsible for bringing about the Penalty or for forcing people to come to the right Path. He is not a guard set over them to free them from the need of exercising their limited free will. (R).

4594 *Cf.* 30:36. It is a sad reflection that men, when they receive some gift out of Allah's Mercy, exult in their good fortune and attribute it to some merit in themselves, instead of to the Grace and Mercy of Allah, thus missing the real lesson of Life. On the other hand, when they are in trouble, due to their own errors and shortcomings, they fall into despair and blame Allah, instead of blaming themselves. This is rank ingratitude. So they miss the true lesson of Life in that case also.

49. To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills(4595) (and plans). He bestows (children) male or female according to His Will (and Plan),

4595 Verses 49-50 deal, in their ordinary meaning, with Allah's creative power replete with knowledge and continued purpose, contrasted with man's instincts and gropings after knowledge. The mystery of sex and parenthood is referred to in a new light With reference to children, a parent is often spoken of as the "author" of their being. The growth of population and the proportion of males and females in it have various sociological and psychological implications; yet how little do parents really know about them? The knowledge of science as regards the determination of sex in the embryo *is* practically nothing. Even if advancing knowledge threw light on what may be called the mechanical aspects of the question, the profounder problems touched by it are beyond the reach of man. Yet they are not governed by chance. Allah has a meaning and purpose in all things, and His power is complete to carry out His purpose.

50. Or He bestows both males(4596) and females, and He leaves barren whom He will: for He is full of Knowledge and Power.

4596 To parents themselves it is a mystery why a male or female child is given at any birth, or how the balance of the two sexes is made up in a family or in large groups of mankind, or why in some cases the womb is barren and the would-be parents are denied the joys and responsibilities of parenthood. But each individual human soul is precious in the Plan of Allah, and all these variations, besides their reactions on parents and on society, have a purpose to fulfil in the large Plan of Allah.

51. It is not fitting(4597) for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration,(4598) or from behind a veil,(4599) or by the sending of a Messenger(4600) to reveal, with Allah.s permission, what Allah wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise.

4597 This leads us on to the higher spiritual meaning of verses 49-50, as leading up to verses 51-53. Man is but a speck in Allah's creation. His growth and family relationships are not by any means comparable to Allah's creative acts, whose various stages are referred to in n. 120 to 2:117, n. 916 to 6:94, and n. 923 to 6:98. That being so in the mysteries of man's daily life, how much more profound is the contrast between man and Allah in the apprehension of the higher spiritual problems concerned with Revelation? How can man be fit to speak to Allah? He is not fit. But there are three ways in which Allah, in His infinite Mercy, communicates with man, as described in verses 51-53.

4598 Allah is Most High, Most Wise: man is, in spite of his high destiny, often the lowest of the low (95:5). Yet Allah, out of His infinite Mercy and Grace, has bestowed His Revelation on man. How does it come about? Three ways are mentioned: (1) *Wahy,* Inspiration: (2) from behind a veil; and (3) by the sending of a Messenger: see the notes following.

Wahy, Inspiration, is interpreted to be of two kinds: (1) a suggestion thrown by Allah into the heart or mind of man, by which man understands the substance of the Message, whether it is a command or prohibition, or an explanation of a great truth; and (2) verbal or literal inspiration, by which the actual words of Allah are conveyed in human language. (R).

4599 *Behind* a *veil:* not of course a material veil, but the mystic veil of Light. (R).

Sahih Muslim relates a tradition that the Prophet said: "His veil is Light: were He to withdraw it, then would the august splendors of His countenance surely consume everything that comes within His Sight." (R).

4600 *Messenger: Rasul* the angel Gabriel, through whom the revelations were given to the Prophet. These spiritual visions, conveying the message of Revelation, are the basis of the Qur'an.

52. And thus have We, by Our Command, sent inspiration to thee: thou knewest not (before)(4601) what was Revelation, and what was Faith; but We have made the (Qur´an) a Light, wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will; and verily thou dost guide (men)(4602) to the Straight Way,-

4601 Before the receipt of his mission in his fortieth year, the Prophet, though a man of steadfast virtue and purity and unflinching in his search for Truth (see C. 22-23), was yet unacquainted with Revelation in the highest sense of the term and with the certainty that comes from perfected Faith, or realised nearness to Allah. *Ruh,* which I have here translated Inspiration has also been understood by some Commentators to refer to the angel Gabriel, the vehicle of Revelation. The Light of the Qur'an made all things clear to man, and to the world.

4602 The Qur'an and the inspired Prophet who proclaimed it, are here identified. They were a Guide to men, showing the Straight Way . This Way is described in various ways: for example, see 1:6, and n. 22; 18:1-2, and notes 2326-2327; and 90:11-18.

53. The Way of Allah,(4603) to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth. Behold (how) all affairs tend towards Allah.

4603 The most comprehensive description of the Straight Way is that it is the Way of Allah, the Way of the Universal Law; for Allah is the source, centre, and goal of all things in heaven and earth. Everything goes back to Him. According to our own understanding we make our own laws, our own standards, and our own institutions. But the ultimate test of their validity or authority is Allah's Will, as revealed to us by His Revelation.



43. Al Zukhruf (The Gold Adornments)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Ha Mim(4604)

4604 Abbreviated Letters: see Introduction to S. 40, paragraphs 2-4.

2. By the Book that makes things clear,-

3. We have made it a Qur´an in Arabic,(4605) that ye may be able to understand (and learn wisdom).

4605 *Cf.* 42:7, n. 4533.

4. And verily, it is in the Mother of the Book,(4606) in Our Presence, high (in dignity), full of wisdom.

4606 *Cf.* 3:7, n. 347; and 13:39 , n. 1864. The Mother of the Book, the Foundation of Revelation, the Preserved Tablet *(al Lawhal Mahfuz,* 85:22), is the core or essence of Revelation, the original principle or fountainhead of Allah's Eternal and Universal Law. From this fountainhead are derived all streams of knowledge and wisdom, that flow through Time and feed the intelligence of created minds. The Mother of the Book is in Allah's own Presence, and its dignity and wisdom are more than all we can think of in the spiritual world.

5. Shall We then(4607) take away the Message from you and repel (you), for that ye are a people transgressing beyond bounds?

4607 In vouchsafing Revelation, what an inestimable Mercy has Allah conferred on mankind! Yet so many deluded souls are ungrateful, and ignore or oppose its teaching. If it were not for His attributes of Forgiveness and Forbearing He would be justified in withdrawing that Light, but He continues to shed it, that all who will may come and be blessed by it.

6. But how many were(4608) the prophets We sent amongst the peoples of old?

4608 In spite of, or because of, man's obstinate and rebellious nature, Allah sent prophet after prophet to the peoples of old, but there was among them always a party that ridiculed them and treated Allah's Signs as naught.

7. And never came there a prophet to them but they mocked him.

8. So We destroyed (them)- stronger in power than these;- and (thus) has passed on(4609) the Parable of the peoples of old.

4609 The result of rebellion was destruction. And the pagan Makkan generation contemporary with the Prophet are reminded that the peoples of old who were destroyed were, many of them, more powerful than they, and that they, in disobeying Allah's Law, were inviting the same fate for themselves. The events of the past have become Parables for the present and the future.

9. If thou wert to question them, ´Who created the heavens and the earth?´(4610) They would be sure to reply, ´they were created by (Him), the Exalted in Power, Full of Knowledge´;-(4611)

4610 *Cf.* 29:61, 29:63 and n. 3493; and 31:25 and n. 3613. This class of men acknowledge Allah's Power and Allah's Knowledge or Wisdom, but do not realise Allah's infinite Mercy and care for His creatures.

4611 Note the beautiful rhetorical figure of speech here. The reply of the inconsistent men who do not follow Allah's Law is turned against themselves. When they acknowledge Allah's Power and Knowledge, their speech is interrupted, and the concomitant qualities of Allah's Mercy and care of His creatures, with pointed reference to the inconsistent ones themselves, is set out in eloquent terms, as completing what they themselves had said, and the right course of conduct is pointed out to them (verses 10-14).

10. (Yea, the same that)(4612) has made for you the earth (like a carpet)(4613) spread out, and has made for you roads (and channels) therein, in order that ye may find guidance (on the way);

4612 See last note.

4613 *Cf.* 20:53 and n. 2576. *Mihad,* a carpet or bed spread out, implies not only freedom of movement but rest also. The 'roads and channels' carry out the idea of communications and include land routes, sea routes, and airways.

11. That sends down (from time to time) rain from the sky in due measure;-(4614) and We raise to life therewith a land that is dead; even so will ye be raised (from the dead);-(4615)

4614 *In due measure: i.e.,* according to needs, as measured by local as well as universal considerations. This applies to normal rainfall: floods and droughts are abnormal conditions, and may be called unusual manifestations of His power, fulfilling some special purpose that we may or may not understand.

4615 The clause 'And We raise .. . (from the dead)' is parenthetical. *Cf.* 35:9, n. 3881. Note the transition from the third to the first person, to mark the Resurrection as a special act of Allah as distinguished from the ordinary processes of nature ordained by Allah.

12. That has created pairs(4616) in all things, and has made for you ships and cattle(4617) on which ye ride,

4616 *Cf.* n. 2578 to 20:53. Also see 36:36, n. 3981.

4617 By analogy all means of transport, including horses, camels, ships, steamers, railways, aeroplanes, airships, etc. The domestication of animals as well as the invention of mechanical means of transport require a skill and ingenuity in man, which are referred to Allah as His gifts or endowments to man.

13. In order that ye may sit firm and square on their backs, and when so seated, ye may celebrate the (kind) favour(4618) of your Lord, and say, "Glory to Him Who has subjected these to our (use), for we could never have accomplished this (by ourselves),

4618 See last note. People of understanding attribute all good to its true and original source *viz.:* Allah.

14. "And to our Lord, surely,(4619) must we turn back!"

4619 Men of understanding, every time they take a journey on earth, are reminded of that more momentous journey which they are taking of the back of Time to Eternity. Have they tamed Time to their lawful use, or do they allow Time to run away with them wildly to where they know not? Their goal is Allah, and their thoughts are ever with Allah.

15. Yet they attribute(4620) to some of His servants a share with Him (in his godhead)! truly is man a blasphemous ingrate avowed!

4620 As a contrast to the men of true understanding are the ungrateful blasphemous creatures, who offer a share in godhead to others besides Allah! They imagine sons and daughters to Allah, and forget the true lesson of the whole of Creation, which points to the Unity of Allah. This theme is further developed in the following Section.

16. What! has He taken(4621) daughters out of what He himself creates, and granted to you sons for choice?

4621 To imagine goddesses (female gods) or mothers or daughters to Allah was particularly blasphemous in the mouths of people who held the female sex in contempt. Such were the pagan Arabs, and such (it is to be feared) are some of the moderns. They wince when a daughter is born to them and hanker after sons. With that mentality, how can they attribute daughters to Allah?

17. When news is brought(4622) to one of them of (the birth of) what he sets up as a likeness to ((Allah)) Most Gracious, his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief!

4622 *Cf.* 16:57-59 and notes. With scathing irony it is pointed out that what they hate and are ashamed of for themselves they attribute to Allah!

18. Is then one brought up(4623) among trinkets, and unable to give a clear account in a dispute (to be associated with Allah.?

4623 The softer sex is usually brought up among trinkets and ornaments, and, on account of the retiring modesty which for the sex is a virtue, is unable to stand up boldly in a fight and give clear indications of the will to win. Is that the sort of quality to be associated with Allah?

19. And they make into females angels who themselves serve(4624) Allah. Did they witness their creation? Their evidence will be recorded, and they will be called to account!

4624 Angels for grace and purity may be compared to the most graceful and purest forms we know. But it is wrong to attribute sex to them. They are servants and messengers of Allah and so far from being rivals seeking worship, are always engaged in devotion and service. If any persons invent blasphemies about Allah, such blasphemies will form a big blot in their Book of Deeds, and they will be called to account for them.

20. ("Ah!") they say, "If it had been the Will(4625) of (Allah) Most Gracious, we should not have worshipped such (deities)!" Of that they have no knowledge! they do nothing but lie!(4626)

4625 Worsted in argument they resort to a dishonest sarcasm. 'We worship these deities: if Allah does not wish us to do so, why does He not prevent us?" In throwing the responsibility on Allah, they ignore the limited free will on which their whole life is based. They are really playing with truth. They are arguing against their own knowledge. They have no authority in any scripture, and indeed they are so slippery that they hold fast to no scripture at all.

4626 *Cf.* 6:116

21. What! have We given them a Book before this, to which they are holding fast?

22. Nay! they say: "We found(4627) our fathers following a certain religion, and we do guide ourselves by their footsteps."

4627 Then comes the argument about ancestral custom, which was repudiated by Abraham (see verses 26-28 below). Indeed a good reply to ancestral custom in the case of the Arabs was the example of Abraham, the True in Faith, for Abraham was the common ancestor of the Arabs and the Israelites.

23. Just in the same way, whenever We sent a Warner before thee to any people, the wealthy ones among them(4628) said: "We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we will certainly follow in their footsteps."

4628 It is some privileged position, and not ancestral custom, which is really at the bottom of much falsehood and hypocrisy in the world. This has been again and again in religious history.

24. He said: "What!(4629) Even if I brought you better guidance than that which ye found your fathers

following?" They said: "For us, we deny that ye (prophets) are sent (on a mission at all)."

4629 The Warner or messenger pointed out the merits and the truth of his teaching, and how superior it was to what they called their ancestral customs. But they denied his mission itself or the validity of any such mission. In other words they did not believe in inspiration or revelation, and went on in their evil ways, with the inevitable result that they brought themselves to destruction.

25. So We exacted retribution from them: now see what was the end of those who rejected (Truth)!

26. Behold! Abraham said(4630) to his father and his people: "I do indeed clear myself of what ye worship:

4630 The plea of ancestral ways is refuted by the example of Abraham, in two ways: (1) he gave up the ancestral cults followed by his father and his people, and followed the true Way, even at some sacrifice to himself; and (2) he was an ancestor of the Arabs, and if the Arabs stood on ancestral ways, why should they not follow their good ancestor Abraham, rather than their bad ancestors who fell into evil? See n. 4627 above. The incident in Abraham's story referred to here will be found in 21:51 -70.

27. "(I worship) only Him Who made me, and He will certainly guide me."

28. And he left it as a Word(4631) to endure among those who came after him, that they may turn back (to Allah..

4631 *A Word: i.e.,* the Gospel of Unity, *viz.,:* "I worship only Him Who made me", as in verse 27. This was his teaching, and this was his legacy to those who followed him. He hoped that they would keep it sacred, and uphold the standard of Unity. *Cf.* C. 7-8. *Cf.* also 37:108-111.

29. Yea, I have given(4632) the good things of this life to these (men) and their fathers, until the Truth has come to them, and a messenger making things clear.

4632 Note the first person singular, as showing Allah's personal solicitude and care for the descendants of Abraham in both branches. The context here refers to the prosperity enjoyed by Makkah and the Makkans until they rejected the truth of Islam when it was preached in their midst by a messenger whose Message was as clear as the light of the sun.

30. But when the Truth came to them, they said: "This is sorcery, and we(4633) do reject it."

4633 When the pagan Makkans could not understand the wonderful power and authority with which the Prophet preached, they called his God-given influence sorcery!

31. Also, they say: "Why is not this Qur´an sent down to some leading man in either of the two(4634) (Chief) cities?"

4634 The world judges by its own low standards. From a worldly point of view, the Prophet was poor and an orphan. Why, they thought, should he be so richly endowed in spiritual knowledge and power? If such a gift had to come to a man among them, it was the right (they foolishly said) of one of the chiefs in either the sacred city of Makkah , or the fertile garden-city of Ta'if!

32. Is it they who would portion out the Mercy of thy Lord?(4635) It is We Who portion out between them their livelihood in the life of this world: and We raise some of them above others in ranks, so that some may command work from others. But the Mercy of thy Lord is better than the (wealth) which they amass.

4635 That is, spiritual gifts, those connected with Revelation. What audacity or folly in them to claim to divide or distribute them among themselves? They may think they are distributing the good things of this world among themselves. In a sense that may be true, but even here, their own power and initiative are very limited. Even here it is Allah's Will on which all depends. In His wisdom Allah allows some to grow in power or riches, and command work from others, and various relative gradations are established. Men scramble for these good things of this world, but they are of no value compared to the spiritual gifts.

33. And were it not that(4636) (all) men might become of one (evil) way of life, We would provide, for everyone that blasphemes against ((Allah)) Most Gracious, silver roofs for their houses and (silver) stair-ways on which to go up,

4636 So little value is attached in the spiritual world to silver or gold, or worldly ranks or adornments, that they would freely be at the disposal of everyone who denied or blasphemed Allah, were it not that in that case there would be too great temptation placed in the way of men, for they might all scramble to sell their spiritual life for wealth! They might have silver roofs and stairways, silver doors and thrones, and all kinds of adornments of gold. But Allah does not allow too great a temptation to be placed in the path of men. He distributes these things differently, some to unjust men, and some to just men, in various degrees, so that the possession of these is no test either of an unjust or a just life. His wisdom searches out motives far more subtle and delicate than any we are even aware of.

34. And (silver) doors to their houses, and thrones (of silver) on which they could recline,

35. And also adornments(4637) of gold. But all this were nothing but conveniences of the present life: The Hereafter, in the sight of thy Lord is for the Righteous.

4637 *Adornments of gold,:* the keyword to this Surah. All false glitter and adornments of this world are as naught. They more often hinder than help.

36. If anyone withdraws himself(4638) from remembrance of ((Allah)) Most Gracious, We appoint for him an evil one, to be an intimate companion to him.

4638 If men deliberately put away the remembrance of Allah from their minds, the natural consequence, under Allah's decree, is that they join on with evil. Like consorts with like. We can generalise evil in the abstract, but it takes concrete shape in our life companions.

37. Such (evil ones) really hinder them from the Path,(4639) but they think that they are being guided aright!

4639 The downward course in evil is rapid. But the most tragic consequence is that evil persuades its victims to believe that they are pursuing good. They think evil to be their good. They go deeper and deeper into the mire, and become more and more callous. *Them* and *they* represent the generic plural of anyone who "withdraws himself from . . . Allah" (see last verse).

38. At length, when (such a one)(4640) comes to Us, he says (to his evil companion): "Would that between me and thee were the distance of East and West!"(4641) Ah! evil is the companion (indeed)!

4640 If ever the presence of Allah is felt, or at the time of J udgement, a glimmering of truth comes to the deceived soul, and it cries to its evil companions in its agony, "Would that I had never come across thee! Would that we were separated poles apart!" But it cannot shake off evil. By deliberate choice it had

4641 *Distance of East and West* literally, 'distance of the two Easts'. Most Commentators understand in this sense, but some construe the phrase as meaning the distance of the extreme points of the rising of the sun, between the summer solstice and the winter solstice. *Cf.* n. 4034 to 37:5. A good equivalent idiom in English would be "poles apart", for they could never meet.

39. When ye have done wrong,(4642) it will avail you nothing, that Day, that ye shall be partners in Punishment!

4642 All partners in evil will certainly share in the punishment, but that is no consolation to any individual soul. Evil desires the evil of others, but that does not diminish its own torment, or get rid of the personal responsibility of each individual soul.

40. Canst thou then make(4643) the deaf to hear, or give direction to the blind or to such as (wander) in manifest error?(4644)

4643 *Cf.* 30:52-53. The evil go headlong into sin, and sink deeper and deeper until their spiritual faculties are deadened, and no outside help can bring them back. Allah's grace they have rejected.

4644 There is hope for a person who wanders in quest of truth, and even for one who wanders through mistake or by weakness of will. But there is none for one who, by deliberate choice, plunges into "manifest error", *i.e.,* error which anyone can see.

41. Even if We take thee(4645) away, We shall be sure to exact retribution from them,

4645 *Cf.* 8:30 : "how the Unbelievers plotted against thee, to keep thee in bonds, or slay thee, or get thee out (of thy home)." They were always plotting against the Prophet in his Makkan period. But even if their plots had succeeded against human beings, they could not defeat Allah's Plan, nor escape the just punishment of their deeds. *Cf.* also 10:46 , and n. 1438.

42. Or We shall show thee that (accomplished) which We have promised them: for verily We shall prevail over them.

43. So hold thou fast(4646) to the Revelation sent down to thee; verily thou art on a Straight Way.

4646 Let the wicked rage, say what they like, or do their worst: the Prophet of Allah is encouraged to go forward steadfastly in the Light given him, for he is on a Path that leads straight to Allah. (R).

44. The (Qur´an) is indeed the message,(4647) for thee and for thy people; and soon shall ye (all) be brought to account.

4647 *Dhikr.* Message, Remembrance, Cause of remembrance, Memorial, Title for remembrance to posterity. Thus two meanings emerge, not necessarily mutually exclusive. (1) The Quran brings a Message of Truth and Guidance to the Prophet, and his people; (2) the Revelation of the Qur'an raises the rank of the Prophet, and the people among whom, and in whose language, it was promulgated, making them worthy of remembrance in the world's history for all time. But the honour also carried its responsibilities. All who hear it must give an account of how far they profit by it spiritually.

45. And question thou our messengers(4648) whom We sent before thee; did We appoint any deities other than ((Allah)) Most Gracious, to be worshipped?

4648 That is, by examining their Message, and asking the learned among their real followers. It will be found that no Religion really teaches the worship of other than Allah.

46. We did send Moses(4649) aforetime, with Our Signs, to Pharaoh and his Chiefs: He said, "I am a messenger of the Lord of the Worlds."

4649 For the story of Moses in detail, see 7:103-137, but especially 7:104, 130-136.

47. But when he came to them with Our Signs, behold they ridiculed them.(4650)

4650 For the mockery of Moses and his Signs see 17:101; also below, 43:49, 52-53.

48. We showed them Sign(4651) after Sign, each greater than its fellow, and We seized them with Punishment, in order that they might turn (to Us).

4651 Moses showed them nine Clear Signs: see n. 1091 to 7:133; also 17:101. Each one of them in its own setting and circumstances was greater than any of its "sister" Signs. The object was if possible to reclaim as many Egyptians as possible from their defiance of Allah.

49. And they said, "O thou(4652) sorcerer! Invoke thy Lord for us according to His covenant with thee; for we shall truly accept guidance."

4652 This speech is half a mockery, and half a ruse. In spite of their unbelief, they had fear in their minds, and in order to stop the plagues, one after another, they promised to obey Allah, and when the particular plague was removed, they again became obdurate. See 7:133-135.

50. But when We removed the Penalty from them, behold, they broke their word.

51. And Pharaoh proclaimed among his people, saying: "O my people! Does not the dominion of Egypt belong to me, (witness)(4653) these streams flowing underneath my (palace)? What! see ye not then?

4653 The *waw* here in Arabic is the *Waw haliyah:* the abundant streams from the Nile flowing beneath his palace being evidence of his power, prosperity, and sovereignty. The Nile made (and makes) Egypt , and the myth of the god Osiris was a compound of the myths of the Nile and the sun. The Pharaoh, therefore, as commanding the Nile, commanded the gods who personified Egypt . He boasted of water, and he perished in water,-a fitting punishment!

52. "Am I not better than this (Moses), who is a contemptible wretch(4654) and can scarcely express himself clearly?

4654 Being a despised Israelite in any case, and having further an impediment in his speech. See 20:27 , and notes 2552-2553.

53. "Then why are not(4655) gold bracelets bestowed on him, or (why) come (not) with him angels accompanying him in procession?"

4655 Gold bracelets and gold chains were possibly among the insignia of royalty. In any case they betokened wealth, and the materialists judge a man's worth by his wealth and his following and equipage. So Pharaoh wanted to see Moses, if he had any position in the spiritual kingdom, invested with gold bracelets, and followed by a great train of angels as his Knight-companions! The same kind of proofs were demanded by the materialistic Quraysh of our Prophet. These were puerilities, but such puerilities go down with the crowd. Barring a few Egyptians who believed in Allah and in the Message of Moses, the rest of Pharaoh's entourage followed Pharaoh in his pursuit of revenge, and were drowned in the Red Sea .

54. Thus did he make fools of his people, and they obeyed him: truly were they a people rebellious (against Allah..

55. When at length they(4656) provoked Us, We exacted retribution from them, and We drowned them all.(4657)

4656 Allah is long-suffering, and gives many and many opportunities to the most hardened sinners for repentance. But at length comes a time when His justice is provoked, and the inevitable punishment follows.

4657 *Cf.* 7:136.

56. And We made them (a people) of the Past(4658) and an Example to later ages.

4658 Pharaoh and his hosts were blotted out, and became as a tale of the past. Their story is an instructive warning and example to future generations. The later course of Egyptian religion after the Exodus is referred to in Appendix V.

57. When (Jesus) the son(4659) of Mary is held up as an example, behold, thy people raise a clamour thereat (in ridicule)!

4659 Jesus was a man, and a prophet to the Children of Israel, "though his own received him not". Some of the churches that were founded after him worshipped him as "God" and as "the son of God", as do the Trinitarian churches to the present day. The orthodox churches did so in the time of the Prophet. When the doctrine of Unity was renewed, and the false worship of others besides Allah was strictly prohibited, all false gods were condemned, *e.g.,* at 21:98. The pagan Arabs looked upon Jesus as being in the same category as their false gods, and could not see why a foreign cult, or a foreign god, as they viewed him, should be considered better than their own gods or idols. There was no substance in this, but mere mockery, and verbal quibbling. Jesus was one of the greater prophets: he was not a god, nor was he responsible for the quibbling subdeties of the Athanasian Creed.

58. And they say, "Are our gods best, or he?" This they set forth to thee, only by way of disputation: yea, they are a contentious people.

59. He was no more than a servant: We granted Our favour to him, and We made him an example to the Children(4660) of Israel.

4660 A reference to the limited mission of the prophet Jesus, whose Gospel to the Jews only survives in uncertain fragmentary forms.

60. And if it were Our Will,(4661) We could make angels from amongst you, succeeding each other on the earth.

4661 If it were said that the birth of Jesus without a father sets him above other prophets, the creation of angels without either father or mother would set them still higher, especially as angels do not eat and drink and are not subject to physical laws. But angels are not higher.

61. And (Jesus) shall be(4662) a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment): therefore have no doubt about the (Hour), but follow ye Me: this is a Straight Way.

4662 This is understood by some commentators to refer to the second coming of Jesus in the Last Days before Resurrection. (R).

62. Let not the Evil One hinder you: for he is to you an enemy avowed.

63. When Jesus came with Clear Signs, he said: "Now have I come to you with Wisdom,(4663) and in order to make clear to you some of the (points) on which ye dispute: therefore fear Allah and obey me.

4663 True wisdom consists in understanding the unity of the Divine purpose and the Unity of the Divine Personality. The man Jesus came to reconcile the jarring sects in Israel , and his true teaching was just the same as that which was expounded in a wider form by Islam. He did not claim to be God; why should not the Christians follow the doctrine of Unity rather than what has become their ancestral and traditional custom?

64. "For Allah, He is my Lord(4664) and your Lord: so worship ye Him: this is a Straight Way."

4664 In verses 26-28 an appeal is made to the pagan Arabs, that Islam is their own religion, the religion of Abraham their ancestor; in verses 46-54, an appeal is made to the Jews that Islam is the same religion as was taught by Moses, and that they should not allow their leaders to make fools of them; in verses 57-65 an appeal is made to the Christians that Islam is the same religion as was taught by Jesus, and that they should give up their sectarian attitude and follow the universal religion, which shows the Straight Way.

65. But sects from among themselves fell into disagreement: then woe to the wrong-doers, from the Penalty of a Grievous Day!

66. Do they only wait(4665) for the Hour - that it should come on them all of a sudden, while they perceive not?

4665 *Cf.* 12:107. What is there to wait for? The Hour of Judgement may come at any moment. It will come all of a sudden before they realise that it is on them. They should make up their minds to give up misleading disputations and come to the Straight Path {see also 47:18).

67. Friends on that Day(4666) will be foes, one to another,- except the Righteous.

4666 The hatred and spite, which are associated with evil, will be felt with peculiar intensity in that period of agony. That itself would be a punishment, from which the righteous will be free. The righteous will have passed all perils of falling into wrong frames of mind.

68. My devotees!(4667) no fear shall be on you that Day, nor shall ye grieve,-

4667 The devotion and service to Allah result in the soul being made free from all fear and sorrow, as regards the past, present, and future, if we may take an analogy from Time for a timeless state. Such devotion and service are shown by (1) believing in Allah's Signs, which means understanding and accepting His Will, and (2) by merging our will completely in His universal Will, which means being in tune with the Infinite, and acting in all things to further His Kingdom.

69. (Being) those who have believed in Our Signs and bowed (their wills to Ours) in Islam.

70. Enter ye the Garden,(4668) ye and your wives, in (beauty and) rejoicing.

4668 The Garden is the type of all that is beautiful to eye, mind, and soul; all that is restful and in tune, a complete state of bliss, such as we can scarcely conceive of in this troubled world. Several metaphors indicate how we can try to picture that bliss to ourselves in "this muddy vesture of decay."

71. To them will be passed(4669) round, dishes and goblets of gold: there will be there all that the souls could desire, all that their ayes could delight in: and ye shall abide therein (for eye).

4669 We shall have all our near and dear ones ("wives") with us: perfected Love will not be content with Self, but like a note of music will find its melody in communion with others. The richest and most beautiful vessels will minister to our purified desires, and give complete and eternal satisfaction to our souls in every way.

72. Such will be the Garden of which ye are made(4670) heirs for your (good) deeds (in life).

4670 We shall be there, not as strangers, or temporary guests, but as heirs-made heirs in eternity because of the good lives we had led on earth.

73. Ye shall have therein abundance of fruit,(4671) from which ye shall have satisfaction.(4672)

4671 The "fruit" here links on with the last words in the last verse (72): "ye are made heirs for your (good) deeds (in life)". It is not a doctrine of "rewards", strictly so called. A reward is measured by merit, but here the bliss is beyond all merits or deserts. It is a doctrine of works and their fruits: every deed must have its inevitable consequences. At first sight it may be compared to the doctrine of "Karma", but it differs from it in postulating Allah's unbounded Mercy, and the efficacy of Repentance. (R).

4672 Literally, "shall eat". But the word *akala* is used in many places in the comprehensive sense of "enjoy", "have satisfaction". For example, see n. 776 to 5:69. *Cf.* also 7:19 and n. 1004.

74. The sinners will be in the Punishment of Hell, to dwell therein (for aye):

75. Nowise will the (Punishment) be lightened for them, and in despair will they be there overwhelmed.

76. Nowise shall We(4673) be unjust to them: but it is they who have been unjust themselves.

4673 The wrongdoers suffer not because Allah is unjust or cruel, nor as a deterrent to others, for the probationary period will then have passed, but because their evil deeds must bear their inevitable fruit. Allah's Grace was ever ready to offer opportunities for Repentance and Forgiveness. But they rejected them. They were unjust to themselves. This is complementary to the doctrine of works and their fruits, as explained in n. 4671 above.

77. They will cry: "O Malik!(4674) would that thy Lord put an end to us!" He will say, "Nay, but ye shall abide!"(4675)

4674 *Malik:* one who is lord or possessor; one who is in charge; applied to the Angel in charge of Hell.

4675 *Cf.* 20:74. Annihilation is better than agony. But wrongdoers cannot destroy the "fruits" of their actions, by asking for annihilation.

78. Verily We have brought(4676) the Truth to you: but most of you have a hatred for Truth.

4676 We come back now to the Present-primarily to the time when Islam was being preached in Makkah, but by analogy the present time or any time. Truth is often bitter to the taste of those who live on Falsehoods and Shams and profit by them. They hate the Truth, and plot against it. But will they succeed? See next verse and note.

79. What! have they settled(4677) some plan (among themselves)? But it is We Who settle things.

4677 Men cannot settle the high affairs of the universe. If they plot against the Truth, the Truth will destroy them, just as, if they accept the Truth, the Truth will make them free. It is Allah Who disposes of affairs.

80. Or do they think(4678) that We hear not their secrets and their private counsels? Indeed (We do), and Our messengers are by them, to record.

4678 However secretly men may plot, everything is known to Allah. His recording Angels are by, at all times and in all places, to prepare a Record of their Deeds for their own conviction when the time comes for Judgement *(Cf.* 45:29).

81. Say: "If (Allah) Most Gracious had a son, I would(4679) be the first to worship."

4679 The prophet of Allah does not object to true worship in any form. But it must be true: it must not superstitiously attribute derogatory things to Allah, or foster false ideas.

82. Glory to the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne(4680) (of Authority)! (He is free) from the things they attribute (to him)!

4680 *Cf.* 7:54 and n. 1032. All Power, Authority, Knowledge, and Truth are with Allah. He neither begets nor is begotten. Glory to Him!

83. So leave them to babble and play (with vanities) until they meet that Day(4681) of theirs, which they have been promised.

4681 *That Day of theirs:* they had their Day on earth; they will have a different sort of Day in the Hereafter, according to the promise of Allah about the Resurrection and Judgement, or perhaps about Retribution in this very life! So leave them to play about with their fancies and vanities. Truth must eventually prevail!

84. It is He Who is Allah in heaven and Allah on earth; and He is full of Wisdom and Knowledge.

85. And blessed is He(4682) to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all between them: with Him is the Knowledge of the Hour (of Judgment): and to Him shall ye be brought back.

4682 We glorify Allah, and we call His name blessed, because He has not only supreme power and authority, but because we shall return to Him and see "the Light of His Countenance" (30:38).

86. And those whom they invoke besides Allah have no power of intercession;- only he(4683) who bears witness to the Truth, and they know (him).

4683 The classical Commentators construe this clause differently. According to their construction, the clause would be translated, "except those who bear witness to the Truth, and with full knowledge." "Truth" they would construe to be the Gospel of Unity. According to them, while idols and false gods have no power of intercession, persons like Jesus, who is falsely worshipped by his misguided followers, but who himself preached the Gospel of Unity with full understanding, will have the power of intercession. This implies that we construe the singular *man shahida* to refer to the same person or persons as the plural *hum ya'lamun.* This difficulty is removed if we construe as I have translated it. In that case "he who bears witness to the Truth" is the Prophet, who came to renew the Gospel of Unity, and "they know (him)" would refer to the Quraysh, amongst whom he was brought up and among whom he earned the reputation of being a man of probity *(Amin).*

87. If thou ask them, Who(4684) created them, they will certainly say, Allah. How then are they deluded away (from the Truth)?

4684 *Cf.* 31:25, and n. 3613; and 39:38, and n. 4299.

88. ((Allah) has knowledge)(4685) of the (Prophet´s) cry, "O my Lord! Truly these are people who will not believe!"(4686)

4685 Commentators are divided in opinion as to the construction. The best opinion is that which I have adopted, referring back *qilihi* genitive governed by *'ilm in* verse 85. An alternative construction is to construe the *wow* here as the *waw qasamiyah;* in that case we should have to suppose some other clause as understood, in order to complete the sense.

4686 The Prophet was much troubled in mind by the Unfaith of the Quraysh: 18:6. He is here told to leave them alone for a time, for the Truth must soon prevail.

89. But turn away from them, and say "Peace!"(4687) But soon shall they know!

4687 *Cf.* 25:63, and n. 3123.



44. Al Dukhan (The Smoke)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Ha Mim.(4688)

4688 These Abbreviated Letters are discussed in the Introduction to S. 40, paragraphs 2-4.

2. By the Book that(4689) makes things clear;-

4689 The Qur'an is its own evidence. In the last Surah (43:3) stress was laid on the fact that everyone could understand it. Here the stress is on the fact that it is a Message of Mercy from Allah in that it warns mankind against evil.

3. We sent it down during a Blessed Night:(4690) for We (ever) wish to warn (against Evil).

4690 Usually taken to be a night in the month of Ramadan, say the 23rd, 25th, or 27th night of that month. It is referred to as the Night of Power in 97:1-2. See also 2:185. But perhaps we need not fix it literally by the calendar. The night that a Message descends from Allah is indeed a blessed night like a day of rain for a parched land.

4. In the (Night) is made distinct every affair of wisdom,(4691)

4691 Such an occasion is one on which divine Wisdom places before us, through Revelation, the solution of spiritual problems of the highest import to mankind.

5. By command, from Our Presence. For We (ever) send (revelations),

6. As Mercy from thy Lord: for He hears and knows(4692) (All things);

4692 It is because Allah is the friend of the friendless and the help of the helpless that He hears all sincere prayers, and as His knowledge embraces all things, He grants to us whatever is best for us, not as we see it, but as He knows it in His perfect knowledge.

7. The Lord of the heavens and the earth and all between them, if ye (but) have an assured faith.(4693)

4693 *Cf.* 2:4. They cannot fully realise what a tremendous thing it is that Allah is their own Lord and Cherisher (next verse), as He is the Lord and Cherisher of the whole Universe, until they firmly believe-until their Faith amounts to a certainty, secure and unshakable.

8. There is no god but He: It is He Who gives life and gives death,- The Lord and Cherisher to you and your earliest ancestors.

9. Yet they play about(4694) in doubt.

4694 The story is mainly about the Quraysh. But there is a wider meaning behind it, applicable to men generally, and at all times. As a body the Quraysh, especially in the earlier stages of the preaching of Islam, before they started persecution, received the Message with more amusement than hatred. They played about with it, and expressed doubts about it, whereas the Preacher was most earnest about it, with all his heart and soul in it, as he loved his people and wished to save them from their wickedness and folly.

10. Then watch thou for the Day(4695) that the sky will bring forth a kind of smoke (or mist)(4696) plainly visible,

4695 What Day is this? It obviously refers to a great calamity, and from the wording it is to be a great calamity in the future, seen with the prophetic eye. The word *yaghsha* in verse 11 may be compared to al *ghashiyah* in 88:1, which obviously refers to the final Day of Judgement. But verse 15 below ("We shall remove the Penalty for a while") shows that it is not the final Judgement referred to here, but some calamity that was to happen soon afterwards. Perhaps it was a famine, about which see the next note.

4696 The "smoke" or "mist" is interpreted on good authority to refer to a severe famine in Makkah, in which men were so pinched with hunger that they saw mist before their eyes when they looked at the sky. Ibn Kathir in his *Tarikh* mentions two famines in Makkah, one in the 8th year of the Mission , say the fourth year before the Hijrah, and another about the 8th year after the Hijrah. But as either or both of these famines lasted as many as seven years, the dates are to be taken very roughly. It is even possible that the two famines were continuous, of varying severity from year to year. Bukhari mentions only the post-Hijrah famine, which was apparently so severe that men began to eat bones and carrion. Abu Sufyan (about 8 A.H.) approached the Prophet to intercede and pray for the removal of the famine, as the Pagans attributed it to the curse of the Prophet. Surah 23, which is also Makkan, but of later date than the present Surah, also refers to a famine: see 23:75, and n. 2921. As Surahs were not all revealed entire, but many came piecemeal, it is possible that particular verses in a given Surah may be of different dates from the Surah as a whole.

11. Enveloping the people: this will be a Penalty Grievous.

12. (They will say:) "Our Lord! remove the Penalty from us, for we do really believe!"

13. How shall the message be (effectual) for them,(4697) seeing that a Messenger explaining things clearly has (already) come to them,-

4697 Quraysh had before them a prophet whose purity of life was openly known to them; they themselves called him *Al Amin* (worthy of all trust); he preached in their own language in words of burning eloquence and transparent clearness; yet they turned away from him and called him a madman, or one whose Message was not inspired by Allah, but written by some hidden hand (see next note)! How will the teaching of spiritual Truth make way among such unreasonable people?

14. Yet they turn away from him and say: "Tutored (by others), a man possessed!"(4698)

4698 *Tutored:* see 16:103, and n. 2143. *Possessed:* see 15:6, and n. 1940.

15. We shall indeed remove(4699) the Penalty for a while, (but) truly ye will revert (to your ways).

4699 Allah gives every chance to all His creatures, however rebellious. He gives them a little trial, perhaps personal, perhaps economic, to see if that would bring them to their bearings, and train their will in the right direction. Some are thus reclaimed, and some do not learn. Perhaps, for the latter, He gives them a chance by removing the trial; some are reclaimed, and some still remain obdurate. And so, in His wisdom, He allows His grace to work, again and again, until, at the last, Judgement must seize the last and irreclaimable remnant "with a mighty onslaught".

Such working of Allah's Providence is clearly visible in the story of Quraysh. It is a pity that the economic conditions of Makkah have not been studied in detail in any of the standard biographies of the Prophet. The so-called biographies by non-Muslims, *e.g.,* Muir's *Life,* do not even mention any Makkan famine or its reactions on Quraysh mind!

16. One day We shall seize you with a mighty onslaught: We will indeed (then) exact Retribution!

17. We did, before them, try the people of Pharaoh:(4700) there came to them a messenger most honourable,(4701)

4700 This reference is to the pride of Pharaoh and his Egyptians, and their fall, rather than to the story of Moses himself; just as in 44:30-33 the reference is to the blessings bestowed on Israel , contrasted with their pride, unbelief, and fall; and in 44:37, to the ancient Himyar kingdom in Yemen , which similarly fell for its sins.

4701 *Most honourable:* this epithet is specially applied to Moses here, as expressing the truth, in contrast to the Pharaoh's false characterisation of him as "a contemptible wretch"(43:52).

18. Saying: "Restore to me(4702) the Servants of Allah. I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust;(4703)

4702 The argument of Moses and his "authority manifest" will be found at 7:104-108, 120-126, 130-137. Notice how fully he assumes the authority of his office here. He claims all "servants of Allah", *i.e.,* true worshippers, as under his protection, for his mission was both to the Egyptians and the Israelites; he asks that they should be restored to *him;* and he boldly denounces the Pharaoh's arrogance "as against Allah".

4703 "Worthy of all trust": *Amin,* a title that applied to prophets in S. 26, *e.g.,* see 26:107. As the Prophet had historically earned that tide among his own people, the reminiscences of the story of Moses apply to him in his relations with the arrogant Quraysh.

19. "And be not arrogant as against Allah. for I come to you with authority manifest.

20. "For me, I have sought(4704) safety with my Lord and your Lord, against your injuring me.(4705)

4704 It is no use their plotting his death or his vilification; for his safety is in Allah. As he truly says, "Allah is not only *my* Lord, but your Lord also; *your* responsibility arises apart from my preaching, but I preach in order to remind you of it."

4705 *"Injuring me":* literally "stoning me". "Stoning may be here symbolical of any injury or vilification.

21. "If ye believe me not,(4706) at least keep yourselves away from me."

4706 If you do not believe me, at least go your ways; do not add to your sins by trying to suppress me and the Message of Truth which I bring: keep out of my way.

22. (But they were aggressive:)(4707) then he cried to his Lord: "These are indeed a people given to sin."

4707 They would not even leave him alone to do his duty. So he cried to Allah, not indeed to destroy them, for a Prophet does not judge, but only Allah judges; he justified himself in prayer, that he had done his best, but they were obdurate in sin, and they were trying to oppress and injure the believers. Then came the order to march. They were to march under the cover of night, because the enemy was sure to pursue. They were to march with all believers, presumably believing Egyptians (such as were not martyred) as well as Israelites, for some Egyptians had believed: 7:121.

23. (The reply came:) "March forth with My Servants by night: for ye are sure to be pursued.

24. "And leave the sea as a furrow (divided):(4708) for they are a host (destined) to be drowned."

4708 For the passage of Moses and his following, the sea had divided: they were to pass through the gap or furrow and leave it alone, to lure on the Egyptian host, on which the sea afterwards closed in, totally destroying them.

25. How many were the gardens(4709) and springs they left behind,

4709 There follows a word picture of all the fine and enjoyable things which the ruling caste had monopolised. Now these proud monopolists were drowned in the sea, and the inheritance went to other hands.

26. And corn-fields and noble buildings,

27. And wealth (and conveniences of life), wherein they had taken such delight!

28. Thus (was their end)! And We made other people inherit (those things)!

29. And neither heaven(4710) nor earth shed a tear over them: nor were they given a respite (again).

4710 They died, "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung". They were too inordinate to be given another chance. Pharaoh had claimed to be their supreme god; and they had followed him!

30. We did deliver aforetime the Children of Israel from humiliating Punishment,(4711)

4711 The Israelites were held in bondage prior to the Exodus. Their hard taskmaster placed every indignity on them, and by Pharaoh's decree their male children were to be killed, and their females were to be kept alive for the Egyptians.

31. Inflicted by Pharaoh, for he was arrogant (even) among inordinate transgressors.

32. And We chose them aforetime above the nations, knowingly,(4712)

4712 From degrading servitude, Israel was delivered, and taken, in spite of many rebellions and backslidings on the way, to "a land flowing with milk and honey", where later they established the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. This was not merely fortuitous. In Allah's prescience it was to be a link in furthering the great universal Plan. But their being chosen did not mean that they could do what they liked. In that sense there is no "chosen race" before Allah. But Allah gives every race and every individual a chance, and when the race or individual fails to live up to it, he or it must fall and give place to others.

33. And granted them Signs(4713) in which there was a manifest trial

4713 Among the "Signs" given to Israel were their own Revelation under Moses, their prosperous land of Canaan , their flourishing Kingdom under David and Solomon, their prophets and teachers of Truth, and the advent of Jesus to reclaim the lost ones among them. All these were trials. When they failed in the trials, they were left to wander desolate and suffer.

34. As to these (Quraish),(4714) they say forsooth:

4714 The cases of the Egyptians and the Israelites having been cited as great nations which fell through inordinate vanity and wrongdoing, the case is now pressed home against the Quraysh leaders in their arrogance to the Prophet himself. They deny Revelation; they deny a future life, as the Sadducees did among the Jews before them; they persecute the Prophet of Allah, and those who believe in him: and they mockingly demand that their ancestors should be brought back to life, if it is true that there is a future life. They are reminded that better men than they lived in their own country of Arabia , men who had knowledge of Allah's revelation under the earliest Dispensation. See next note. They perished because of their unbelief and wrongdoing. What chance have they unless they turn and repent?

35. "There is nothing beyond our first death, and we shall not be raised again.

36. "Then bring (back) our forefathers, if what ye say is true!"

37. What! Are they better than the people of Tubba(4715) and those who were before them? We destroyed them because they were guilty of sin.(4716)

4715 Tubba' is understood to be a title or family name of Himyar kings in Yemen , of the tribe of Hamdan. The Himyar were an ancient race. At one time they seem to have extended their hegemony over all Arabia and perhaps beyond, to the East African Coast . Their earliest religion seems to have been Sabianism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies. They seem at different times, later on, to have professed the Jewish and the Christian religion. Among the Embassies sent by the Prophet in A.H. 9-10 was one to the Himyar of Yemen, which led to their coming into Islam. This was of course much later than the date of this Surah.

4716 In prehistoric time the Himyar and Yemen seem to have played a large part in Arabia and even beyond: see last note. But when they were intoxicated with power, they fell into sin, and gradually they ceased to count, not only in Arabia but even in Yemen .

38. We created not the heavens, the earth, and all between them, merely in (idle) sport:(4717)

4717 *Cf.* 21:16 , and n. 2676. All creation is for a wise and just purpose. But men usually do not realise or understand it, because they are steeped in their own ignorance, folly, or passions.

39. We created them not except for just ends: but most of them do not understand.

40. Verily the Day of(4718) sorting out is the time appointed for all of them,-

4718 Day of Sorting Out, or the Day of Decision. *Cf.* 37:21, and n. 4047. Ignorance, prejudice, passion, spite, and selfishness, seem sometimes to flourish in this probationary life. In any case they are mixed up with knowledge, justice, common sense, love and regard for others. But the good and the evil will be sorted out and separated at the Day of Judgement There is a time appointed for it. In Allah's good time all will come right.

41. The Day when no protector(4719) can avail his client in aught, and no help can they receive,

4719 When that Day comes, the strictest justice will prevail. No man, however prominently he may have walked on the world's stage, can help anodier. He himself will need help, not the sort of logrolling help which high and low render to each other in this life, but which in the conditions of reality will be of no avail. The only things which will help will be the Mercy of Allah.

42. Except such as receive(4720) Allah.s Mercy: for He is Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

4720 Allah's Mercy will be the only thing of any efficacy: for He is both able t o help ("Exalted in Might") and willing to forgive ("Most Merciful").

43. Verily the tree(4721) of Zaqqum(4722)

4721 Now follows a word-picture of the horrors to which Evil must lead us. What human language and what figures of speech can adequately describe them?

4722 The opposite of "delicious Fruits" is the terrible tree of *Zaqqum,* which is further described in 37:62-68, where see n. 4073. Also see 17:60, n. 2250.

44. **Will be the food of the Sinful,-**

45. **Like molten brass; it will boil in their insides.**

46. **Like the boiling of scalding water.**

47. **(A voice will cry: "Seize ye him and drag him into the midst of the Blazing Fire!**

48. **"Then pour over his head the Penalty of Boiling Water,**

49. **"Taste thou (this)! Truly wast thou mighty, full of honour!(4723)**

4723 In this particular Surah the besetting sin we are considering is the arrogance born of place or power, wealth or honour, as understood in this world. The punishment of ignominy looks back to the kind of sin which is to be punished.

50. **"Truly this is what ye used to doubt!"(4724)**

4724 When the Punishment becomes a realised fact, how foolish will those look who doubted whether there would be a Hereafter?

51. **As to the Righteous (they will be) in a position of Security,(4725)**

4725 There will be no uncertainty, as on this earth; no danger of discontinuance; no possibility of their satisfaction being terminated?

52. **Among Gardens and Springs;**

53. **Dressed in fine silk(4726) and in rich brocade, they will face each other;(4727)**

4726 *Cf.* 18:31 , and n. 2373.

4727 Everything will be open and in social companionship: for all the petty feelings of jealousy or exclusiveness will have passed away.

54. **So; and We shall join them to Companions(4728) with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes.(4729)**

4728 The Companions, like the scene, the dress, the outlook, and the fruit, will be beautiful. There will be life, but free from all earthly grossness. The women as well as the men of this life will attain to this indescribable bliss. (R).

4729 *Hur* implies the following ideas: (1) purity; possibly the word *Hawariyun,* as applied to the first Disciples of Jesus, is connected with this root; (2) beauty, especially of eyes, where the intense white of the eyeballs stands out against the intense black of the pupil, thus giving the appearance of lustre, and intense feeling: as opposed to dullness or want of expression; and (3) truth and good will.

55. **There can they call for every kind of fruit(4730) in peace and security;**

4730 The metaphorical signification is explained in n. 4671 to 43:73.

56. **Nor will they there taste Death, except the first(4731) death; and He will preserve them from the Penalty of the Blazing Fire,-(4732)**

4731 *First Death:* the ordinary natural death from this life, which brought them to the Garden of Felicity : there will be no further death after that. *Cf.* 37:59, and n. 4071.

4732 In Islam we are taught that salvation is not possible of our unaided efforts. Certainly, striving on our part is an indispensable condition: but it is the Mercy of Allah which comes to our help and keeps us from the Fire of final Punishment. This is mentioned last as the foundation on which is built our eternal felicity and our positive spiritual joys. (R).

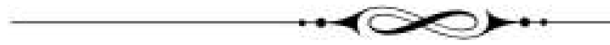
57. **As a Bounty from thy Lord! that will be the supreme achievement!(4733)**

4733 This is our idea of Salvation: the negative avoidance of all the consequences of evil, and the positive attainment of all—and more than all—that our hearts could possibly desire. For Allah's Bounty outstrips anything that our eyes have seen, or our ears have heard of, or our imagination can conceive. *(Cf.* 4:13).

58. **Verily, We have made this (Qur´an) easy,(4734) in thy tongue, in order that they may give heed.**

4734 *Easy:* not only to understand, being in the Arabic tongue; but mellifluous, whose rhythm carries off our spirits to a higher spiritual plane. In another sense, it is difficult; for to get its deepest meaning, we shall have to strive hard, as the contents of this Surah alone will show.

59. **So wait thou and watch; for they (too) are waiting.**



45. Al Jathiyah (The Kneeling Down)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. **Ha Mim.(4735)**

4735 See Introduction to S. 40, paragraphs 2-4.

2. **The revelation(4736) of the Book is from Allah the Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.**

4736 This verse is the same as 40:2. except that "wisdom" is here substituted in the last line for "Knowledge". This is appropriate, as in this Surah we are dealing with the folly of those who reject Allah and His Signs, while S. 40 dealt with the individual soul's witness to Faith and Virtue.

3. **Verily in the heavens(4737) and the earth, are Signs for those who believe.**

4737 Verses 3-5 deal with some of the points in the noble argument in 2:164, but again there are differences on account of the different context. Note that here the argument is divided into three parts, one in each verse. (1) In verse 3 we are dealing with big Signs external to ourselves, some of which are far beyond our personal experiences: for diem we require Faith: they are Signs "for those who believe." For the other two see the next two notes.

4. **And in the creation(4738) of yourselves and the fact that animals are scattered (through the earth), are Signs for those of assured Faith.**

4738 (2) These Signs are in our own nature and in the animals we meet with every day; here we have certainty within human limits: these are "for those of assured Faith."

5. And in the alternation(4739) of Night and Day, and the fact that Allah sends down Sustenance(4740) from the sky, and revives therewith the earth after its death, and in the change of the winds,- are Signs for those that are wise.

4739 (3) These are our daily experiences from external things, but they affect us and our lives intimately: here are questions of deductions "for those that are wise."

4740 "Sustenance" is almost equivalent here to "rain" itself, and its revival of a dead earth, which refer symbolically to Revelation and its putting new life into a dead soul. Similarly the alternation of Night and Day, and the change of the winds, besides being Signs as wonderful phenomena of Nature, refer to spiritual ignorance and knowledge, rest and activity, and the constant beneficent changes that are going on in the world, making for the spread of the blessing of Allah's Revelation. *(Cf.* n. 4540 and n. 4554).

6. Such are the Signs(4741) of Allah, which We rehearse to thee in Truth; then in what exposition will they believe after (rejecting) Allah and His Signs?

4741 If there are any to whom the Signs from Nature, from within their own heart and conscience, and from the voice of Revelation, are not enough to convince them, what possible kind of exposition will they accept?

7. Woe to each sinful dealer in Falsehoods:(4742)

4742 A soul so dead, as described in the last note, is indeed wretched. It will resort to falsehoods, in worship, in conduct, and in its attitude towards Allah. It will be obstinate, and pretend to be "above such things'. It will hear the most beautiful Message but not profit by it. The loss or punishment is its own, and grievous it is!

8. He hears the Signs of Allah rehearsed to him, yet is obstinate and lofty, as if he had not heard them: then announce to him a Penalty Grievous!

9. And when he learns something of Our Signs, he takes them in jest: for such there will be a humiliating Penalty.(4743)

4743 Note that in each of the verses 8-11 the Penalty is characterised by a certain description, which accords with the crime. (1) In verse 8, the man is arrogant about the Signs of Allah's love and care all around him, and his Penalty is "grievous". (2) In verse 9, he ridicules Allah's Signs, and his Penalty is "humiliating": he makes himself a ridiculous fool. (3) and (4) are described in the two following notes.

10. In front of them is Hell: and of no profit to them is anything they may have earned, nor any protectors they may have taken to themselves besides Allah. for them is a tremendous Penalty.(4744)

4744 (3) In verse 10 the sinner has piled up all the good things of this life, and thinks he has got plenty of helpers and protectors but all these things are of no use. On the contrary, his Penalty will be "tremendous", to correspond with the great pains which he has taken to multiply the gods of his worship.

11. This is (true) Guidance and for those who reject the Signs of their Lord, is a grievous Penalty of abomination.(4745)

4745 (4) In *verse* 11, he has flouted and rejected the specific guidance that came to him from the Word of Allah, or from the admonition of a Prophet of Allah. His Penalty is a penalty of abomination: he earns unspeakable horror and abomination from all the Righteous, and is an unclean object in the Kingdom of Heaven .

12. It is Allah Who has subjected the sea to you,(4746) that ships may sail through it by His command, that ye may seek of his Bounty, and that ye may be grateful.

4746 *Cf.* 16:14 and notes thereon, especially n. 2037. The one encircling ocean of our globe is one of the most significant facts in our physical geography. Its salt water is an agent of global sanitation. The salubrious effects of sea air, with its ozone, are well known to everyone who has recouped his health by its means. Thanks to ships, the sea unites rather than divides: communications are, and have always been, more active between seacoast towns than further inland. They thus further human intercourse, and help us to seek the "Bounty of Allah", not only in a commercial but in an intellectual and spiritual sense. All this is through "Allah's command" *i.e.,* by His beneficent ordering of the universe, and we should be grateful.

13. And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens(4747) and on earth: Behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect.

4747 *Cf.* 31:20, and n. 3605. The sea was only one example of Allah's cherishing care in making all things in nature available for the use of man, through the genius and faculties which He has given to man. Man should never forget that it is all "as from Him", *i.e.,* from Allah. For is not man Allah's vicegerent on earth (2:30)?

14. Tell those who believe, to forgive those who do not look forward to the Days of Allah:(4748) It is for Him to recompense(4749) (for good or ill) each People(4750) according to what they have earned.

4748 *Cf.* 7:54 , n. 1031. The *Days of Allah* I interpret to mean not periods of twenty-four hours, but the stages through which Allah's Purpose works in us on bringing home to us a sense of sin and a sense of Allah's Mercy. We must be patient with those who have not yet acquired that sense. "Days of Allah" may also mean the Days of the Kingdom of Allah , when evil will be destroyed and Allah's authority will reign unquestioned.

4749 Allah will give due recompense for good or evil according to His own full Knowledge and righteous Plan, and in His own good time. (R).

4750 "People" here may be taken to be a group of common characteristics, *e.g.,* the righteous in contrast with the unrighteous, the oppressed in contrast with the oppressors, and so on.

15. If any one does(4751) a righteous deed, it ensures to the benefit of his own soul; if he does evil, it works against (his own soul). In the end will ye (all) be brought back to your Lord.

4751 Ordinarily good and evil come to their own even in this world; but in any case there is the final Judgement before Allah.

16. We did aforetime grant to the Children(4752) of Israel the Book the Power of Command, and Prophethood; We gave them, for Sustenance, things(4753) good and pure; and We favoured them above the nations.

4752 The argument here is similar to that in 44:32-33 but; it is more particularised here. Israel had the Revelation through Moses, the power of judgement and command through the Kingdom of David and Solomon, and numerous prophetic warnings through such men as Isaiah and Jeremiah.

4753 "Sustenance", here as elsewhere is to be understood both in a physical and metaphorical sense. The Mosaic Law laid down rules of diet, excluding things unclean, and it laid down rules for a pure and honourable life. In this way Israel became the standard-bearer of Allah's law, thus "favoured above the nations."

17. And We granted them Clear Signs in affairs (of Religion): it was only(4754) after knowledge had been granted to them that they fell into schisms, through insolent envy(4755) among themselves. Verily thy Lord will judge between them on the Day of Judgment as to those matters in which they set up differences.

4754 *Cf.* 10:93. The Jews were the more to blame that they fell from Grace after all the divine favours which they had enjoyed. Their schisms and differences arose from mutual envy, which was rebellious insolence against Allah. As the next verse shows, some of them (not all) rejected the mission of the Prophet, also through envy that a Prophet had come among the Arabians.

4755 *Cf.* 2:90, and that whole passage, with its notes.

18. Then We put thee on the (right) Way(4756) of Religion: so follow thou that (Way), and follow not the desires of those who know not.

4756 Shari'ah is best translated the "right Way of Religion", which is wider than the mere formal rites and legal provisions, which mostly came in the Madinah period, long after this Makkan verse had been revealed.

19. They will be of no use to thee in the sight(4757) of Allah. it is only Wrong-doers (that stand as) protectors, one to another: but Allah is the Protector of the Righteous.

4757 That is, in thy service of Allah. Ignorant and contentious men are of no use or service to any Cause. The more you seek their help, the more do their ignorance and their contentiousness increase their own importance in their own eyes. Evil protects (or thinks it protects) evil: it has really no power of protection at all, for itself or for others. The righteous seek the protection of Allah, Who can and will protect them.

20. These are clear evidences(4758) to men and a Guidance and Mercy to those of assured Faith.

4758 The evidences of Allah's Signs should be clear to all men: to men of Faith, who accept Allah's Grace, they are a Guide and a Mercy.

21. What! Do those who seek after evil ways think that We shall hold them equal with(4759) those who believe and do righteous deeds,- that equal will be their life and their death? Ill is the judgment that they make.

4759 Three meanings can be deduced. (1) The evil ones are not in Allah's sight like the righteous ones; neither in life nor in death are they equal; in life the righteous are guided by Allah and receive His Grace, and after death His Mercy, while the others reject His Grace, and after death receive condemnation. (2) Neither are the two the same in this life and in the afterlife; if the wicked flourish here, they will be condemned in the Hereafter; if the good are in suffering or sorrow here, they will receive comfort and consolation in the Hereafter; (3) The real life of the righteous--for they have received spiritual life--is not like the nominal life of the wicked, which is really death; nor is the physical death of the righteous, which will bring them into eternal life, like the terrible death of the wicked which will bring them to eternal misery.

22. Allah created the heavens(4760) and the earth for just ends, and in order that each soul may find the recompense of what it has earned, and none of them be wronged.

4760 *Cf.* 44:38-39, and n. 4717. The government of the world is so ordered that each soul gets every chance for its full development, and it reaps the fruit of all its activities. If it breaks away from Allah's Grace, it suffers, but no injustice is done to anyone: on the contrary Allah's Bounty is always beyond man's deserts,

23. Then seest thou such(4761) a one as takes as his god his own vain desire? Allah has, knowing (him as such), left him astray, and sealed(4762) his hearing and his heart (and understanding), and put a cover on his sight. Who, then, will guide him after Allah (has withdrawn Guidance)? Will ye not then receive admonition?

4761 If a man follows, not the laws of Allah, which are also the laws of his own pure nature as made by Allah, but the desires of his own distorted self, as shaped by the rebellion of his will, the inevitable consequence will be the withdrawal of Allah's grace and guidance. All his faculties will then be debased, and there will be nothing to guide him, unless he turns in repentance again to Allah.

4762 *Cf.* 2:7 and notes.

24. And they say: "What is there but our life in this world? We shall die and we live,(4763) and nothing but time can destroy us." But of that they have no knowledge: they merely conjecture:

4763 *Cf.* 23:37, and n. 2896. The additional touch here, "And nothing but Time can destroy us", suggests the materialist philosophy that Matter and Time are eternal backwards and forwards; and possibly also that though each individual perishes, the race lasts till Time destroys it. This is not knowledge but conjecture. Why not accept light from Him Who knows all.

25. And when Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them their argument is nothing but this: They say, "Bring(4764) (back) our forefathers, if what ye say is true!"

4764 *Cf.* 44:36. It is no argument to say, "If there is a future life, bring back our forefathers and let us see them here and now!" It is not for a man to raise the dead when and where he pleases. It is for Allah to command. And His promise is about the general Resurrection for the Day of Judgement. In His hands are the keys of life and death.

26. Say: "It is Allah Who gives you life, then gives you death; then He will gather you together for the Day of Judgment about which there is no doubt": But most men do not understand.

27. To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and the Day that the Hour of Judgment is established,- that Day will the dealers(4765) in Falsehood perish!

4765 These vain wranglers about the future life and deniers of the Truth may have a run in this fleeting world; but the moment the world of Reality is established, they will see what they now deny. The facts will destroy their fancies, and they themselves will find themselves humiliated and lost, for having deliberately ignored Allah's Signs and acted in opposition to His Holy Will.

28. And thou wilt see every sect bowing the knee:(4766) Every sect will be called to its Record: "This Day shall ye be recompensed for all that ye did!

4766 *Bowing the knee:* the key phrase of the Surah, and its title, *Cf.* 19:72. Whatever the arrogance of the wicked may be in this life, whatever exclusive sects and divisions they may form in this life, the time will come when they will humbly submit and bow the knee of the Truth. Before the Judgement Seat, when their Record is produced, they must necessarily be dumb.

29. "This Our Record speaks about you with truth: For We were wont(4767) to put on Record all that ye did."

4767 *Cf.* 43:80. Nothing misses the Recording Angel, and whatever is said in the Record is true.

30. Then, as to those who believed and did righteous deeds, their Lord will admit them to His Mercy that will be the Achievement(4768) for all to see.

4768 The attainment and satisfaction of all hopes and desires; the reaching of the final goal of Bliss. *Cf.* 44:57, and n. 4733.

31. But as to those who rejected Allah, (to them will be said): "Were not Our Signs rehearsed to you? But ye were arrogant, and were a people given to sin!

32. "And when it was said that the promise of Allah was true, and that the Hour- there was no doubt about its (coming), ye used to say, ´We know not what is(4769) the hour: we only think it is an idea, and we have no firm assurance.´"

4769 There is arrogance as well as untruth in this pretence. The coming of Judgement has been proclaimed times out of number by every Prophet of Allah. They cannot dismiss it as a mere idea or superstition. Their object is merely an ostentatious and lofty rejection of Faith.

33. Then will appear to them the evil (fruits) of what they did, and they will be(4770) completely encircled by that which they used to mock at!

4770 *Cf.* 11:8. Their mockery will be turned against themselves, for they will be hemmed in by the very Realities which they had ignored or doubted or laughed at, (see also n. 4806 to 46:26).

34. It will also be said: "This Day We will(4771) forget you as ye forgot the meeting of this Day of yours! and your abode is the Fire, and no helpers have ye!

4771 *Cf.* 7:51 and n. 1029. "Forget" is of course metaphorical for "deliberately to ignore".

35. "This, because ye used to take the Signs of Allah in jest, and the life of the world deceived you:"(4772) (From) that Day, therefore, they shall not be taken out thence, nor shall they be received into Grace.

4772 It is implied that 'you deliberately allowed yourselves to be deceived by the vanities of this world', or 'that you put yourselves into a position where you were deceived, for you were expressly warned against Evil'.

36. Then Praise be to Allah, (4773)Lord of the heavens and Lord of the earth,- Lord and Cherisher of all the Worlds!

4773 The argument having been completed about the fruits of this life being reaped in the *Ma'ad,* or the Hereafter, when perfect balance will be restored and perfect Justice will reign supreme, the Surah closes with praise and glory to Allah, Who is not only Omnipotent but is full of Wisdom, and cherishes and cares for all His creation. We began with the remembrance of His Revelation and Mercy, and we close with the celebration of His goodness, power, and wisdom. Note how the argument is rounded off by the reminiscence of the last clause of the second verse of this Surah.

37. To Him be glory throughout the heavens and the earth: and He is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom!



46. Al Ahqaf (Winding Sand-tracts)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Ha Mim.(4774)

4774 See introduction to S. 40, paragraphs 2-4.

2. The revelation(4775) of the Book is from Allah the Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

4775 This verse is the same as the second verse of the last Surah, but the theme is worked out differently in the two Surah. In S. 45 was shown how deniers of Revelation will at last be humbled until they can no longer deny its truth and power. In this Surah is shown how Truth and Revelation will be vindicated by patience and constancy (46:35).

3. We created not(4776) the heavens and the earth and all between them but for just ends, and for a Term Appointed: But those who reject Faith turn away from that whereof they are warned.

4776 *Cf.* 45:22- Many things may appear to us in the present world as strange and inexplicable. But everything made by Allah has a just purpose which must be fulfilled. Nothing in this world is permanent: everything is for an appointed term. The Word of Allah alone abides. All else will pass away after it has fulfilled its purpose. But Unbelievers refuse to face the danger of which they are warned.

4. Say: "Do ye see(4777) what it is ye invoke besides Allah. Show me what it is they have created on earth, or have they a share in the heavens bring me a Book(4778) (revealed) before this, or any remnant of knowledge (ye may have), if ye are telling the truth!

4777 Some people may rush thoughtlessly into false worship, because it is the fashion or an ancestral custom, etc. They are asked to pause and see for themselves. Have the false gods or falsehood created anything? (They destroy much). Or have they any share or lot in the things we associate with the heavens-spiritual well-being, etc.?

4778 Or is there any warrant for you from any earlier revelation, assuming that you do not believe in this Revelation? Or can you point to the least scrap or remnant of real knowledge on which you can base what we condemn as your false life? No, you cannot.

5. And who is more astray(4779) than one who invokes besides Allah, such as will not answer him to the Day of Judgment, and who (in fact) are unconscious of their call (to them)?

4779 As there is no argument at all in favour of your sham worship, what sense is there in it? Either your false gods are senseless stocks and stones which will never answer you to the end of Time, being themselves devoid of understanding, or they are real objects which will disown you at the last *(Cf.* 25:17-18). If you worshipped Self, your own misused faculties will witness against you at the last (41:20-23). If you worshipped good men or prophets, like Jesus, they will disown you (5:119). Similarly, if you worshipped angels, they will disown you (34:40-41).

6. And when mankind are gathered together (at the Resurrection), they will be hostile to them and reject their worship (altogether)!

7. When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them, the Unbelievers say, of the Truth when it comes to them:(4780) "This is evident sorcery!"

4780 When the truth is actually brought to their doors, they call it sorcery! *Cf.* 37:12-15, and n. 4042.

8. Or do they say, "He has forged it"? Say: "Had I forged it, then can ye obtain(4781) no single (blessing) for me from Allah. He knows best of that whereof ye talk (so glibly)! Enough is He for a witness between me and you! And he is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

4781 'If I forged a message from myself as one purporting to come from Allah, you would not be able to see me enjoy any of the blessings from Allah which I enjoy: you would not see me calm and relying on Allah, nor would you see me bear the reputation of being a trustworthy man. A liar comes to an evil end. But what about those who talk so glibly and freely about things which they know not? Allah knows all, and He is my witness! But even against your false accusations, I pray for His forgiveness and mercy to you, for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!'

9. Say: "I am no bringer(4782) of new-fangled doctrine among the messengers, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I follow but that which is revealed to me by inspiration; I am but a Warner open and clear."

4782 'What is there to forge? All prophets have taught the Unity of Allah and our duty to mankind. I bring no new-fangled doctrine, but eternal truths that have been known to good men through the ages. It is to reclaim you that I have came. I do not know what will be your fate for all this callousness, nor what you will do to me. But this I know, that I am preaching truth and righteousness, as inspired by Allah. My duty is only to proclaim aloud and clearly the Message entrustred to me by Allah. The rest I leave to Allah.'

10. Say: "See ye?(4783) If (this teaching) be from Allah, and ye reject it, and a witness from among the Children of Israel testifies to its similarity(4784) (with earlier scripture), and has believed while ye are arrogant, (how unjust ye are!) truly, Allah guides not a people unjust."

4783 Another side of the argument is now presented, You pagan Arabs! You are puffed up with pride, though you are an ignorant nation. Among Israel there are men who understand the previous scriptures, and who find the Qur'an and its Preacher a true confirmation of the previous scriptures. They accept Islam as a fulfillment of the revelation of Moses himself! (See Deut 18:18 -19). And yet you hold back, though the Qur'an has come in your own language, in order to help you to understand. How unjust and how shameful! In that case, with what face can you seek guidance from Allah?'

4784 There were learned Jews (and Christians) who saw in the Prophet the Messenger of Allah foreshadowed in previous Revelations, and accepted Islam. As this is a Makkan Surah we need not construe this as a reference to 'Abd Allah ibn Salam, whose conversion was in Madinah only two years before the Prophet's death, unless we accept this particular verse to be so late in date. The sincere Jews were in a position to understand how this Revelation fitted in with all they had learnt about Revelation.

11. The Unbelievers say of those who believe: "If (this Message) were(4785) a good thing, (such men) would not have gone to it first, before us!" And seeing that they guide not themselves thereby, they will say, "this is an (old,) falsehood!"

4785 A great many of the early Muslims were in humble positions, and were despised by the Quraysh leaders. 'If such men could see any good in Islam,' they said, 'there could be no good in it: if there had been any good in it, we should have been the first to see it!' The spiritually blind have such a good conceit of themselves! As they reject it, and as the Revelation is proved to have historic foundations, they can only call it "an old, old falsehood"!

12. And before this, was(4786) the Book of Moses as a guide and a mercy: And this Book confirms (it) in the Arabic tongue; to admonish the unjust, and as Glad Tidings to those who do right.

4786 The last revealed Book which was a Code of Life *(Shari 'ah)* was the Book of Moses: for that of Jesus was not such a Code, but merely moral precepts to sweep away the corruptions that had crept in. The Qur'an has the same attitude to it as the teaching of Jesus had to the Law. Jesus said (Matt. 5:17): "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil," But the corruptions took new forms in Christian Churches : an entirely new *Shari 'ah* became necessary, and this was provided in Islam.

13. Verily those who say,(4787) "Our Lord is Allah," and remain firm (on that Path),- on them shall be no fear,(4788) nor shall they grieve.

4787 To say, "Our Lord is Allah" is to acknowledge that we owe no service to any creature, and shall render none: Allah shall have our exclusive devotion. "To remain firm on that Path" is shown by our conduct: we prove that we love Allah and all His creatures, and will unflinchingly do our duty in all circumstances.

4788 *Cf.* 2:38 . The phrase occurs in numerous other places, with a new application on each occasion. Here, if our claim is true that 'our Lord is Allah', what fear can possibly come to us, or what calamity can there be to cause us grief? For our Lord is our Cherisher, Defender, and Helper, our Hope and our Comfort, which can never fail.

14. Such shall be Companions of the Gardens, dwelling therein (for aye): a recompense for their (good) deeds.

15. We have enjoined on man(4789) kindness to his parents: In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months.(4790) At length, when he reaches the age of full strength(4791) and attains forty years, he says, "O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favour which Thou has bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and that I may work righteousness such as Thou mayest approve; and be gracious to me in my issue. Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow (to Thee) in Islam."

4789 *Cf.* 29:8 and 31:14.

4790 In 31:14 the time of weaning was stated to be at the age of two years, *i.e.,* 24 months. See also 2:233. That leaves six months as the *minimum* period of human gestation after which the child is known to be viable. This is in accordance with the latest ascertained scientific facts. The *average period* is 280 days, or ten times the inter-menstrual period, and of course the average period of weaning is much less than 24 months.

The maximum period of breast-feeding (2 years) is again in accordance with the time that the first dentition is ordinarily completed in a human child. The lower milk incisors in the centre come out between the 6th and 9th months; then come out the milk teeth at intervals, until the canines appear. The second molars come out at about 24 months, and with them the child has a complete apparatus of milk teeth. Nature now expects him to chew and masticate and be independent of his mother's milk completely. On the other hand it hurts the mother to feed from the breast after the child has a complete set of milk teeth. The permanent teeth begin at the sixth year, and the second molars come at 12 years. The third molars are the wisdom teeth, which may appear at 18 to 20 years, or not at all.

4791 The age of full strength *(ashudd)* is held to be between 18 and 30 or 32. Between 30 and 40 the man is in his best manhood. After that he begins to look to his growing issue, and rightly commends the new generation to Allah. Perhaps his spiritual faculties also gain the upper hand after 40.

16. Such are they from whom We shall accept the best(4792) of their deeds and pass by their ill deeds: (They shall be) among the Companions of the Garden: a promise! of truth, which was made to them (in this life).

4792 *Cf.* 29:7 and n. 3429.

17. But (there is one)(4793) who says to his parents, "Fie on you! Do ye hold out the promise to me that I shall be raised up, even though generations have passed before me (without rising again)?" And they two seek Allah.s aid, (and rebuke the son): "Woe to thee! Have faith! for the promise of Allah is true." But he says, "This is nothing but tales of the ancients!"

4793 A godly man often has an ungodly son, who flouts all that the father held sacred, and looks upon his father himself as old-fashioned and unworthy of respect or regard. The contrast in an individual family may be matched by the contrast in the passing and the rising generations of mankind. All this happens as a passing phase in the normal evolution of mankind, and there is nothing in this to be despondent about. What we have to do is for the mature generations to bring up their successors in godly ways, and for the younger generations to realise that age and experience count for something, especially in the understanding of spiritual matters and other matters of the highest moment to man.

18. Such are they against whom(4794) is proved the sentence among the previous generations of Jinns and men, that have passed away; for they will be (utterly) lost.

4794 *Cf.* 41:25 and n. 4494. Each individual, each generation, and each people is responsible for its own good deeds or misdeeds. The law of actions and their fruits applies: you cannot blame one for another. The only remedy lies in seeking for Allah's Grace and Mercy, not only for ourselves but for others in brotherly or fatherly love.

This verse is in balanced contrast to verse 16 above.

19. And to all(4795) are (assigned) degrees according to the deeds which they (have done), and in order that

((Allah)) may recompense their deeds, and no injustice be done to them.

4795 There is fine grading in the spiritual Kingdom. Every deed, good or bad, is judged and weighed to the minutest degree, with its motives, intentions, results, and relevant circumstances. It is not a mere rough classification. The fruits of evil will be exactly according to the degree of evil. But, as stated in other passages *(e.g.,* 28:84), the reward of good deeds will be far beyond their merits, on account of the Mercy and unbounded Bounty of Allah.

20. And on the Day that the Unbelievers will be placed before the Fire, (It will be said to them): "Ye received your good things(4796) in the life of the world, and ye took your pleasure out of them: but today shall ye be recompensed(4797) with a Penalty of humiliation: for that ye were arrogant on earth without just cause, and that ye (ever) transgressed."

4796 *Received your good things* implies (in Arabic) grabbing at them, being greedy of them, seeking them as fleeting pleasures rather than the most serious things of life, sacrificing the spiritual for the material.

4797 They will be told: 'You took your choice, and you must pay the price. You did wrong in a rebellious spirit, and prided yourselves on your wrongdoing, not occasionally, but of set purpose and constantly. Now will you be humbled in the dust, as a fitting punishment.'

21. Mention (Hud) one of ´Ad´s (own) brethren:(4798) Behold, he warned his people about the winding Sand-tracts:(4799) but there have been warners before him and after him: "Worship ye none other than Allah. Truly I fear for you the Penalty of a Mighty Day."

4798 *Cf.* 7:65, and note 1040. The point is that the Warner who was raised among 'Ad people-as among other peoples-was not a stranger, but one of their own brethren, even as the Prophet began his preaching with a call to his own brethren Quraysh.

4799 *Winding Sand-tracts: Ahqaf:* Introduction to this Surah. The very things, which, under irrigation and with Allah's Grace, gave them prosperity and power, were to be their undoing when they broke Allah's Law and defied His Grace. See verses 24-26 below.

22. They said: "Hast thou come(4800) in order to turn us aside from our gods? Then bring upon us the (calamity) with which thou dost threaten us, if thou art telling the truth?"

4800 They were too much wedded to their evil ways—to the false gods that they worshipped-to appreciate the sincere advice of the Prophet of Allah. They defied him and defied Allah Who had sent him. Mockingly they challenged him to bring on the threatened punishment! For they did not believe a word of what he said.

23. He said: "The Knowledge(4801) (of when it will come) is only with Allah. I proclaim to you the mission on which I have been sent: But I see that ye are a people in ignorance!"..

4801 The coming of the Punishment for evil was (and is always) certain. At what particular time it would come he could not tell. It is not for the prophet, but for Allah, to bring on the Penalty. But he saw that it was useless to appeal to them on account of the ignorance in which they were content to dwell.

24. Then, when they saw(4802) the (Penalty in the shape of) a cloud traversing the sky, coming to meet their valleys, they said, "This cloud will give us rain!" "Nay, it is the (Calamity) ye were asking to be hastened!- A wind wherein is a Grievous Penalty!

4802 The Punishment came suddenly, and when they least expected it. They wanted rain, and they saw a cloud and rejoiced. Behold, it was coming towards their own tracts, winding through the hills. Their irrigation channels would be full, their fields would be green, and their season would be fruitful. But no! What is this? It is a tremendous hurricane, carrying destruction on its wings! A violent blast, with dust and sand! Its fury destroys everything in its wake! Lives lost! Fields covered with sandhills! The morning dawns on a scene of desolation! Where were the men who boasted and defied their Lord! There are only the ruins of their houses to witness to the past!

25. "Everything will it destroy by the command of its Lord!" Then by the morning they -(4803) nothing was to be seen but (the ruins of) their houses! thus do We recompense those given to sin!

4803 Here is the figure of speech known in rhetoric as aposiopesis, to heighten the effect of the suddenness and completeness of the calamity. In the Arabic text, the verb *asbahu,* in the diird person plural, leads us to expect that we shall be told what they were doing in the morning. But no! They had been wiped out, and any small remnant had fled (see n, 1040 to 7:65). Nothing was to be seen but the ruins of their houses.

26. And We had firmly established them in a (prosperity and) power which We have not given to you (ye Quraish!) and We had endowed them with (faculties of)(4804) hearing, seeing, heart and intellect: but of no profit to them were their (faculties of) hearing, sight, and heart and intellect, when they went on rejecting the Signs(4805) of Allah. and they were (completely) encircled(4806) by that which they used to mock at!

4804 'Ad and their successors Thamud were more richly endowed with the faculties of the arts, sciences, and culture than ever were Quraysh before Islam. "Hearing and seeing" refer to the experimental faculties; the word "heart" in Arabic includes intellect, or the rational faculties, as well as the instruments of feeling and emotion, the aesthetic faculties. The Second 'Ad, or Thamud, have left interesting traces of their architecture in the country round the Hijr: see n. 1043 to 7:73, and notes 2002-2003 to 15:80-82.

4805 The highest talents and faculties of this world are useless in the spiritual world if we reject the laws of the spiritual world and thus become outlaws there

4806 See n. 4770 to 45:33. They used to mock at Allah's Signs, but those were the very things which hemmed them in, and showed that they had more power and effectiveness than anything else.

27. We destroyed aforetime populations round about you;(4807) and We have shown the Signs in various ways, that they may turn (to Us).

4807 In Arabian history and tradition alone, to say nothing of Allah's Signs elsewhere, sin inevitably suffered its Punishment, and in various ways. Would not the later people take warning?

28. Why then was no help forthcoming to them from those whom they worshipped as gods, besides Allah, as a means of access (to Allah.? Nay, they left them in the lurch: but that was their falsehood and their invention.(4808)

4808 The false things that they worshipped were figments of their imagination. If they had had any existence in fact, it was not of the kind they imagined.

29. Behold, We turned towards thee a company(4809) of Jinns (quietly) listening to the Qur´an: when they stood in the presence thereof, they said, "Listen in silence!" When the (reading) was finished, they returned to their people, to warn (them of their sins).

4809 *A company Jinns. Nafar* (company) may mean a group of from three to ten persons. *For Jinns,* see n. 929 to 6:100. They listened to the reading of the Qur'an with great respect. The next verse shows that they had heard of the Jewish religion, but they were impressed with the Message of Islam, and they seem to have gone back to their people to share the Good News with them (see also n. 5727). (R).

30. They said, "O our people! We have heard a Book revealed after Moses, confirming what came before it: it guides (men) to the Truth and to a Straight Path.

31. "O our people, hearken to the one who invites(4810) (you) to Allah, and believe in him: He will forgive you your faults, and deliver you from a Penalty Grievous.

4810 The one who invites all to Allah is the Prophet. He invites us to Allah: if we believe in Allah and His Prophet, Allah will forgive us our sins on our repentance and amendment of our lives, and save us the Penalty of the future life.

32. "If any does not hearken to the one who invites (us) to Allah, he cannot(4811) frustrate ((Allah)´s Plan) on earth, and no protectors can he have besides Allah. such men (wander) in manifest error."

4811 If a person refuses to believe the Truth, or opposses it, it has not the least effect on Allah's Holy Plan, which will go on to its completion; but it will deprive such a person of Grace and of any protection whatever; he will wander about as an outlaw in manifest helplessness.

33. See they not that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, and never wearied with their creation,(4812) is able to give life to the dead? Yea, verily He has power over all things.

4812 *Cf.* 2:255 (Verse of the Throne): "His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them." He Whose power is constant and unwearied in creating and preserving all things in heaven and earth can surely give life to the dead at the Resurrection.

34. And on the Day that(4813) the Unbelievers will be placed before the Fire, (they will be asked,) "Is this not the Truth?" they will say, "Yea, by our Lord!" (One will say:) "Then taste ye(4814) the Penalty, for that ye were wont to deny (Truth)!"

4813 *Cf.* 46:20, where the argument was closed about the undutiful son of a good father. After that the example of 'Ad and of the believing Jinns was cited, and now is closed that argument in similar terms.

4814 The Truth which they denied is now all too clear to them. They are out of the Light of Truth, out of the Light of Allah's Countenance. And that in itself is a terrible Penalty.

35. Therefore patiently persevere, as did (all) messengers of inflexible purpose; and be in no haste about the (Unbelievers). On the Day that they see the (Punishment)(4815) promised them, (it will be) as if they had not tarried more than an hour in a single day. (Thine but) to proclaim the Message:(4816) but shall any be destroyed except those who transgress?

4815 All spiritual work proceeds in its own good time. We should never be impatient either about its success or about the punishment which is bound to come for those who oppose it or wish to suppress it. The inevitable punishment is spoken of as the *Punishment promised.* It will come so soon and so suddenly that it will appear as if there was not the delay of a single hour in a single day! Time is a great factor in our affairs in this world, but it hardly counts in the spiritual Kingdom.

4816 The Preacher's duty is to proclaim the Message in unmistakable terms. If any human beings come in the way, it will be to their own destruction; but none but rebellious transgressors will be punished. There is always hope and forgiveness for repentance and amendment.



47. Muhammad

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Those who reject Allah and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah,- their deeds will Allah render astray(4817) (from their mark).

4817 Whatever they do will miss its mark, because Allah is the source of all energy and life. Jf the wicked try to persecute men or seduce them from the Truth, the result will be the opposite of what they intend.

2. But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and believe in the (Revelation) sent down to Muhammad - for it is the Truth from their Lord,- He will remove from them their ills and improve their condition.(4818)

4818 *Bal* means state or condition, whether external, or of the heart and mind. Both meanings apply here. The more the wicked rage, the better will be the position of the righteous, and Allah will make it easier and easier for the righteous to love and follow the Truth.

3. This because those who reject Allah follow vanities, while those who believe follow the Truth from their Lord: Thus does Allah set forth(4819) for men their lessons by similitudes.

4819 We learn the greatest spiritual lessons by parables and similitudes from things that happen in the outer world. If a man goes after a mirage or a thing that has no real existence, he can never reach his goal, while the man that follows the kindly Light from Allah that leads him on must be happier in mind, sounder in heart, and firmer in life, generally for every moment that he lives.

4. Therefore, when ye meet(4820) the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; At length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond(4821) firmly (on them): thereafter (is the time for) either generosity or ransom:(4822) Until the war lays down its burdens. Thus (are ye commanded): but if it had been Allah's Will, He could certainly have exacted retribution from them (Himself); but (He lets you fight) in order to test you,(4823) some with others. But those who are slain(4824) in the Way of Allah,- He will never let their deeds be lost.

4820 When once the fight (Jihad) is entered upon, carry it out with the utmost vigour, and strike home your blows at the most vital points *(smite at their necks),* both literally and figuratively. You cannot wage war with kid gloves.

4821 In the first onset there must necessarily be great lass of life; but when the enemy is fairly beaten, which means, in a Jihad, that he is not likely to seek again the persecution of Truth, firm arrangements should be made to bring him under control. I thus construe the words "bind a bond firmly (on them)", but others have construed the words to mean, "after the enemy's numbers are fairly thinned down, prisoners may be taken". With this passage may be compared 8:67, and n. 1234.

4822 When once the enemy is brought under control, generosity *(i.e.,* the release of prisoners without ransom) or ransom is recommended.

4823 The Believers are tested in Faith by the extent to which they are willing to make sacrifices, even to the laying down of their lives; and the enemies are tested as to whether they would repent and let the righteous live in freedom and security.

4824 There are two alternative readings. (1) *qatalu,* "those who fight", and (2) *qatilu,* "those who are slain". The meaning under the first reading is wider, and includes that under the second. I have translated on the basis of the second reading, which is in accordance with the text of the Royal Egyptian edition

5. Soon will He guide them(4825) and improve their condition,

4825 If we read "who are slain" in the last clause but one of verse 4, (see last note), "guide" would mean "guide them in their spiritual journey after death". *Improve their condition:* see n. 4818 above.If after death, their minds and hearts will be more and more settled and at rest, and their spiritual satisfaction greater.

6. And admit them to the Garden which He(4826) has announced for them.

4826 *The Garden which He has announced for them:* the state of Bliss which is declared in Revelation to be destined for those who serve Allah.

7. O ye who believe! If ye will aid (the cause of) Allah, He will aid you, and plant your feet firmly.

8. But those who reject (Allah),- for them is destruction, and (Allah) will render their deeds astray(4827) (from their mark).

4827 See above, 47:1 and n. 4817.

9. That is because they hate the Revelation of Allah. so He has made their deeds fruitless.(4828)

4828 Their deeds *are fruitless* in the sense that they are in vain; they do not produce the results intended by their doers. But they will not be exempt from producing the natural consequences of evil, *viz.,* further degradation and misery for the soul.

10. Do they not travel(4829) through the earth, and see what was the End of those before them (who did evil)? Allah brought utter destruction on them, and similar (fates await) those who reject Allah.

4829 The end of evil is evil. All past history and tradition shows that. Will not men of every generation learn that lesson? Allah helps His servants, but those who rebel against Allah have no one to help them.

11. That is because Allah is the Protector of those who believe, but those who reject Allah have no protector.

12. Verily Allah will admit those who believe and do righteous deeds, to Gardens beneath which rivers flow; while those who reject Allah will enjoy (this world)(4830) and eat as cattle eat; and the Fire will be their abode.

4830 An apt simile. Beasts of the field eat their fill, but have no higher interests. Men who worship the world exclusively are no better: their pleasures and enjoyments rise no higher than those of the beasts of the field. They have no inkling of spiritual happiness. On the contrary, as they were endowed with spiritual faculties which they misused, they will not escape the Fire of Punishment, the Penalty of Sin.

13. And how many cities, with more power than thy city which has driven thee out,(4831) have We destroyed (for their sins)? and there was none to aid them.

4831 A reference to Pagan Makkah, which drove out the Prophet because of his righteousness and because he preached Repentance. The date of this Surah must therefore be after the Hijrah.

14. Is then one who is on a clear(4832) (Path) from his Lord, no better than one to whom the evil of his conduct seems pleasing, and such as follow their own lusts?

4832 *Clear,* or enlightened; a Path on which shines the Light of Allah.

15. (Here is) a Parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised: in it are rivers of water incorruptible;(4833) rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey pure and clear. In it there are for them all kinds of fruits;(4834) and Grace from their Lord.(4835) (Can those in such Bliss) be compared to such as shall dwell for ever in the Fire, and be given, to drink, boiling water, so that it cuts up(4836) their bowels (to pieces)?

4833 In this symbolism there are four kinds of drinks and all kinds of fruits; and the summing up of all spiritual delights in the "Grace from their Lord". The four kinds of drinks are: (1) delicious, cool, pure water, not like earthly water, for it never suffers corruption; (2) milk which never turns sour, whose taste is like that of fresh warm milk drawn from the udder; (3) wine, not like any wine on earth, for it leaves no headaches behind, and causes no intoxication, which is a kind of madness or poison, but is ever ajoy to drink; and (4) honey, pure and clear, with no admixture of wax or any foreign substance. These drinks, again speaking metaphorically, will cool the spirit, feed the heart, warm the affections, and sweeten life. (R).

4834 See n. 4671 to 43:73. (Eds.)

4835 *Grace from their Lord:* that is the covering up or blotting out of sin and all that was sad or unsatisfactory in the lower life; the pure Light from the Countenance of Allah Most High: 92:20.

4836 *Cf.* 37:66-67, and n. 4074. Just as the Bliss of the Blessed will penetrate their being through and through, so the agony of the condemned ones will penetrate their being through and through. "Bowels" besides meaning their inmost being, also suggests the seat of their feelings and affections.

16. And among them are men who listen to thee, but in the end, when they go out from thee,(4837) they say to those who have received Knowledge, "What is it he said just then?" Such are men whose hearts Allah has sealed, and who follow their own lusts.

4837 *Cf.* 10:42 , and n. 1434; also 6:25, 36, and n. 857. The case here referred to is that of the Hypocrites who came to the assemblies of Islam in Madinah and pretended to listen to the Prophet's teaching and preaching. But their heart and mind were not in learning righteousness, but in carping at things they saw and heard. When they got out, they knew nothing of the teaching, but on the contrary asked foolish and ignorant questions, such as might raise doubts.

17. But to those who receive(4838) Guidance, He increases the (light of) Guidance, and bestows on them their Piety and Restraint (from evil).

4838 Spiritual advancement is progressive: each step makes the next ones easier and more complete.

18. Do they then only wait(4839) for the Hour,- that it should come on them of a sudden? But already have come some tokens(4840) thereof, and when it (actually) is on them, how can they benefit then by their admonition?

4839 *Cf.* 43:66, and n. 4665.

4840 The sands of time are always running, and when a wrong is done, the time for its punishment is approaching every moment. No one should therefore wait. The time for repentance is *Now* at any given time. When the punishment comes, it is too late for repentance, and all admonition would be useless.

Looking to the particular time when this Surah was revealed, *viz.,* about a year after the Hijrah, already there were Signs that the plans of the Pagans to crush Islam were crumbling to pieces. The Hijrah showed how much good will there was in Madinah for the Prophet of Allah, and how many people from Makkah adhered to him. The battle of Badr showed that they could hold their own against odds of three to one.

19. Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah, and ask forgiveness for thy fault,(4841) and for the men and women who believe: for Allah knows how ye(4842) move about and how ye dwell in your homes.

4841 *Cf.* 40:55, and n. 4428.

4842 The time and manner of our conducting ourselves at home and when we move about on our business are all material to the judgement of our conduct, and for every nuance in our moral and spiritual progress, we must seek Allah's help and guidance.

20. Those who believe say,(4843) "Why is not a sura sent down (for us)?" But when a sura of basic or categorical(4844) meaning is revealed, and fighting is mentioned therein, thou wilt see those in whose hearts is a disease(4845) looking at thee with a look of one in swoon at the approach of death. But more fitting for them-

4843 The men of faith and loyalty are eager and anxious to get a command to serve the Cause even if it be at the sacrifice of their lives. Not so the Hypocrites, "those in whose hearts is a disease". They are mortally afraid as mentioned below.

4844 *Cf.* 3:7, and n. 347. The defence of truth and righteousness at all sacrifice, when a definite and categorical command issues from *Amir al Mu'minin* is a fundamental condition of enlistment in the cause of Allah. It is true that Punishment and Judgement belong to Allah alone; but our mettle and fidelity have to be tested, (see verse 4 above), and Allah uses human agency in human affairs. (R).

4845 *Cf.* 2:10 . The disease is hypocrisy, disloyalty to the Cause, want of courage and of the spirit of self-sacrifice, want of true understanding.

21. Were it to obey and say what is just, and when a matter(4846) is resolved on, it were best for them if they were true to Allah.

4846 The resolution is not taken except under guidance from Allah. Those, therefore, who fail to implement it by their own effort and sacrifice, are not true to Allah. And such disloyalty or cowardice is not even good for them from a worldly point of view. With what face can they meet their friends after their disgraceful conduct?

22. Then, is it(4847) to be expected of you, if ye were put in authority, that ye will do mischief in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin?

4847 It is no use to say, as the Quraysh said, that it is not seemly to fight against kith and kin. From one point of view the stand against sin brings "not peace, but a sword". It is a case of either subduing evil or being subdued by evil. If evil gets the upper hand, it is not likely to respect ties of kith and kin. It did not in the case of the Prophet and his adherents, and had to be suppressed, to bring about the conditions necessary for peace.

23. Such are the men whom Allah has cursed(4848) for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.

4848 *Cursed: i.e.,* deprived of His Grace: left them straying, because they deliberately rejected His guidance. The result is that what they hear is as if they had not heard, and what they see is as if they had not seen. They have no desire to understand Allah's Will or Allah's Revelation—or is it that they have themselves locked and bolted their hearts and minds, so that nothing can penetrate them?

24. Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur´an, or are their hearts locked up by them?

25. Those who turn back(4849) as apostates after Guidance was clearly shown to them,- the Evil One has instigated them and busied them up with false hopes.

4849 Such men are entirely in the hands of Evil. They follow its suggestions, and their hopes are built on its deceptions.

26. This, because they said(4850) to those who hate what Allah has revealed, "We will obey you in part of (this) matter"; but Allah knows their (inner) secrets.

4850 They have become so impervious to facts and truths, because, without the courage to oppose Allah's Cause openly, they secretly intrigue with Allah's enemies, and say that they will follow them part of the way, and by remaining partly in the other camp, they will be far more useful as spies and half-hearted doubters than by going over altogether. If they think that this game will be successful, they are mistaken. All the inner secrets and motives of their hearts are known to Allah. *Cf.* 59:11.

27. But how (will it be)(4851) when the angels take their souls at death, and smite their faces(4852) and their backs?

4851 It is all very well for them to practise hypocrisy in this life. How will they feel at death, when they find that the angels know all, and touch the very spots they had taken such care to conceal?

4852 *Their faces and their backs:* there is a subtle metaphor. The *face* is what looks to the front, the side you present to the outer world; the *back* is what is not shown, what is hidden from the world. The hypocrites will be hit at both points. Or, the *face* is what they boast of, what they are proud of; the back is the skeleton in the cupboard, the things they dare not utter, but which yet haunt them. The hypocrites are hit on ever} 7 side. *Cf.* 8:50 .

28. This because they followed that which called forth the Wrath of Allah, and they hated Allah.s good pleasure; so He made their deeds of no effect.

29. Or do those in whose(4853) hearts is a disease, think that Allah will not bring to light all their rancour?

4853 *Cf.* verse 20 above, and n. 4845. Being diseased at the very core of their being, they do not understand the simplest facts of spiritual life.

30. Had We so wiled, We could have shown them up to thee, and thou shouldst have known them(4854) by their marks: but surely thou wilt know them by the tone of their speech! And Allah knows all that ye do.

4854 Evil is not always necessarily branded in this life with a distinguishing mark or brand. But the discerning ones know. Evil is betrayed by its speech and behaviour.

31. And We shall try you(4855) until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience; and We shall try your reported (mettle).(4856)

4855 *Cf.* 34:21, and n. 3821. The test and trial is for our own psychological development, to help in the exercise of such choice as has been given to us in our free will. *Cf.* also 3:154, and n. 467.

4856 *Akhbar.* the things reported of you; reputation for courage and constancy, which has to be brought to the test of facts and experience. In an epigram of Tacitus we are told of a Roman Emperor that he would have been considered in every way to have been worthy of being a ruler if only he had never ruled! So in life people may think us courageous, true, noble, and self-sacrificing; and we may consider ourselves as possessing all such virtues; but it is actual experience that will bring them to the test.

32. Those who reject Allah, hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, and resist the Messenger, after Guidance has been clearly shown to them,(4857) will not injure Allah in the least, but He will make their deeds of no effect.

4857 *Cf.* verse 25 above, and verse 34 below; in verse 25 was shown the source of the evil, *viz.,* yielding to the deceptions of the Evil One; in this verse are shown the proximate consequences of such yielding to evil, *viz.,* failure of all we do; and in verse 34 below are shown the eternal consequences, *viz.,* our deprivation of Allah's Grace and Mercy.

33. O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger, and make not vain your deeds!

34. Those who reject Allah,(4858) and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, then die rejecting Allah,- Allah will not forgive them.

4858 See last note.

35. Be not weary and faint-hearted, crying for peace, when ye should be(4859) uppermost: for Allah is with you, and will never put you in loss for your (good) deeds.

4859 To those who are trying to root out evil, and *have authority* to do so, the question is not of peace or conflict, but of whether Good or Evil is to prevail. They must remember the Good must ultimately prevail, and Allah's help is with those who, as far as men can, are trying to further the universal Plan. *Cf.* n. 4847 to verse 22 above.

36. The life of this world is but play and amusement:(4860) and if ye believe and guard against Evil, He will grant you your recompense, and will not ask you (to give up) your possessions.(4861)

4860 *Cf.* 6:32 , and n. 855; and 29:64, and n. 3497. Amusement and play are not bad things in themselves. As preparations for the more serious life, they have their value. But if we concentrate on them, and neglect the business of life, we cannot prosper. So we must use our life in this world as a preparation for our spiritual or inner life.

4861 Complete self-sacrifice, if voluntarily offered, has a meaning: it means that the person's devotion is exclusively and completely for the Cause. But no law or rule can *demand* it. And a mere offer to kill yourself has no meaning. You should be ready to take risks to your life in fighting for the Cause, but you should aim at life, not death. If you live, you should be ready to place your substance and your acquisitions at the disposal of the Cause. But it is not reasonable to pauperise yourself and become a hanger-on for the Cause. Moreover, the inborn tendency to self-preservation in an average man would lead to concealment and miserliness if *all* were asked for the Cause, by Law, and there would further be a feeling of bitterness and rebellion.

37. If He were to ask you for all of them, and press you, ye would covetously withhold, and He would(4862) bring out all your ill-feeling.(4861)

4862 *Cf.* 3:180.

4861 Complete self-sacrifice, if voluntarily offered, has a meaning: it means that the person's devotion is exclusively and completely for the Cause. But no law or rule can *demand* it. And a mere offer to kill yourself has no meaning. You should be ready to take risks to your life in fighting for the Cause, but you should aim at life, not death. If you live, you should be ready to place your substance and your acquisitions at the disposal of the Cause. But it is not reasonable to pauperise yourself and become a hanger-on for the Cause. Moreover, the inborn tendency to self-preservation in an average man would lead to concealment and miserliness if *all* were asked for the Cause, by Law, and there would further be a feeling of bitterness and rebellion.

38. Behold, ye are those(4864) invited to spend (of your substance) in the Way of Allah. But among you are some that are niggardly. But any who are niggardly are so at the expense of their own souls. But Allah is free of all wants, and it is ye that are needy. If ye turn back(4865) (from the Path), He will substitute in your stead another people; then they would not be like you!

4864 Here the cases of the special devotee and of the average man with his human foibles are distinguished. Stinginess is not a virtue: it hurts more the finer nature of the individual practising it than it hurts the Cause. Allah is free of all wants and independent of any need that we can meet. His Cause is similarly independent of human aid. But it uses human agency for our own human advancement. The need to be able to serve Allah's cause is ours. We are the needy beggars who should claim the privilege before the Lord of Bounties unbounded. (R).

4865 If we desert the Cause, the Cause will not fail. Better men than we will uphold the flag. But we should fall, and others will take our place, who are not so timid, half-hearted, or stingy. In Wordsworth's words, "High Heaven rejects the lore of nicely calculated less or more."



48. Al Fath (The Victory)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Verily We have granted thee a manifest Victory:(4866)

4866 This is best referred to the Treaty of Hudaybiyah, for which see the Introduction to this Surah. By this Treaty the Makkan Quraysh. after many years of unrelenting conflict with Islam, at length recognised Islam as (what they thought) an equal power with themselves. In reality the door was then opened for the free spread of Islam throughout Arabia and thence through the world.

2. That Allah may forgive thee(4867) thy faults of the past and those to follow; fulfil His favour to thee; and guide thee on the Straight Way;

4867 Seen. 4428 to 40:55, and *Cf.* 47:19. Any mistakes of the past were now rectified, and any future ones prevented by the free scope now offered, by the act of the Quraysh Pagans themselves, to the recognition and free promulgation of Islam.

3. And that Allah may help thee with powerful help.(4869)

4869 The results were achieved by tranquillity, calmness, and cool courage among the 1400 to 1500 unarmed men who accompanied the Prophet to Hudaybiyah and who were threatened with violence by the excited Quraysh leaders of Makkah.

4. It is He Who sent down Tranquillity(4869) into the hearts of the Believers, that they may add faith to their faith;-(4870) for to Allah belong the Forces of the heavens (4871)and the earth; and Allah is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom;-

4869 The results were achieved by tranquillity, calmness, and cool courage among the 1400 to 1500 unarmed men who accompanied the Prophet to Hudaybiyah and who were threatened with violence by the excited Quraysh leaders of Makkah.

4870 It is a casuistical question to ask, are there degrees in Faith? The plain meaning is that Believers will see one Sign of Allah after another, and with each their Faith is confirmed. During all the long years of persecution and conflict they had Faith, but when they see their old enemies actually coming out to negotiate with them, their Faith is justified, fulfilled, and confirmed: and they turn in gratitude to Allah.

4871 There are visible forces which you see in the physical world. Men fight with armed forces, and the Muslims had to defend themselves with arms also, and not without success. But social, moral, and spiritual forces were fighting for them under Allah's command, and they were the real forces that established the Message of Islam and the position of its Leader and Preacher.

5. That He may admit(4872) the men and women who believe, to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein for aye, and remove their ills from them;- and that is, in the sight of Allah, the highest achievement (for man),-

4872 This clause is coordinated to the previous clause, "That they may add Faith to their Faith". The intervening words, "For to Allah . . . and Wisdom" are parenthetical. The third co-ordinate clause comes in the next verse, "And that He

may punish ..." The skeleton construction will be, "Allah sends down calm courage to Believers in order that they may be confirmed in their Faith; that they may qualify for the Bliss of Heaven; and that the evil ones may receive the punishment they deserve."

6. And that He may punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Polytheists men and women, who imagine an evil opinion of Allah. On them is a round(4873) of Evil: the Wrath of Allah is on them: He has cursed(4874) them and got Hell ready for them: and evil is it for a destination.

4873 They will be encircled (or hemmed in) by Evil.

4874 That is, deprived them of His Grace, on account of their continued rejection of it.

7. For to Allah belong(4875) the Forces of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

4875 These words are repeated (with a slight change) from the parenthetical clause in verse 4, to emphasize the assertion as a substantive proposition, that fighting and visible forces in the physical world are not the only forces with which Allah works out His Plan. The invisible forces are more important as they were at Hudaybiyah. The slight difference is instructive; in the parenthetical clause, Allah's Knowledge was emphasized, and in the substantive clause it is Allah's Power. Knowledge plans, and Power executes.

8. We have truly sent thee(4876) as a witness, as a bringer of Glad Tidings, and as a Warner:

4876 The Prophet came in order to establish Faith in Allah and true worship. We can view him in three capacities: (1) as a witness to help the weak if they were oppressed and check the strong if they did wrong; (2) as a giver of the Glad Tidings of Allah's Grace and Mercy to those who repented and lived good lives; and (3) as one who warned sinners of the consequences of their sin.

9. In order that ye (O men) may believe in Allah and His Messenger, that ye may assist and honour Him,(4876-A) and celebrate His praise morning and evening.

4876-A *Assist and honour Him:* most commentators agree that the pronoun 'Him' refers to Allah, while a few believe it refers to the Prophet. [Eds.].

10. Verily those who plight(4877) their fealty to thee do no less than plight their fealty to Allah. the Hand of Allah is over their hands: then any one who violates his oath, does so to the harm of his own soul, and any one who fulfils what he has covenanted with Allah,- Allah will soon grant him a great Reward.

4877 In the Hudaybiyah negotiations, when it was uncertain whether Quraysh would treat well or ill the Prophet's delegate to Makkah, there was a great wave of feeling in the Muslim camp of 1400 to 1500 men. They came with great enthusiasm and swore their fealty to the Prophet, by placing hand on hand according the Arab custom: see paragraph 3 of the Introduction to this Surah. This in itself was wonderful demonstration of moral and material strength, a true Victory; it is called *Bay'at alRidzvan* (Fealty of Allah's Good Pleasure) in Islamic History. They placed their hands on the Prophet's hand, but the Hand of Allah was above them, and He accepted their Fealty. (R).

11. The desert Arabs who(4878) lagged behind will say to thee: "We were engaged in (looking after) our flocks and herds, and our families: do thou then ask forgiveness for us.(4879)" They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Say: "Who then has any power at all (to intervene) on your behalf with Allah, if His Will is to give you some loss(4880) or to give you some profit? But Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.

4878 When the Prophet started from Madinah on the Makkah journey which ended in Hudaybiyah, he asked all Muslims to join him in the pious undertaking, and he had a splendid response. But some of the desert tribes hung back and made excuses. Their faith was but lukewarm, and they did not want to share in any trouble which the Makkans might give to the unarmed Muslims on pilgrimage. Their excuse that they were engaged in looking after their flocks and herds and their families was an afterthought, and in any case made after the return of the Prophet and his party with enhanced prestige to Madinah.

4879 They said this with their tongues, but no thought of piety was in their hearts.

4880 Their false excuse was based on a calculation of worldly profit and loss. But what about the spiritual loss in detaching themselves from the Prophet or spiritual profit in joining in the splendidly loyal feelings of service and obedience which were demonstrated at Hudaybiyah? And in any case they need not think that all their real and secret motives were not known to Allah.

12. "Nay, ye thought that the Messenger and the Believers would never return to their families; this seemed pleasing in your hearts,(4881) and ye conceived an evil thought, for ye are a people lost (in wickedness)."

4881 Their faith was so shaky that they thought the worst would happen, and that the Makkan Quraysh would destroy the unarmed band. In their heart of hearts they would not have been sorry, because they were steeped in wickedness and rejoiced in the sufferings of others. But such persons will burn in the fire of their own disappointment.

13. And if any believe not in Allah and His Messenger, We have prepared, for those who reject Allah, a Blazing Fire!

14. To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: He forgives whom He wills,(4882) and He punishes whom He wills: but Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

4882 Evil must inevitably have its punishment, but there is one way of escape, *viz.,* through repentance and the Mercy of Allah. Allah's Justice will punish, but Allah's Mercy will forgive; and the Mercy is the predominant feature in Allah's universe: "He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

15. Those who lagged behind(4883) (will say), when ye (are free to) march and take booty (in war): "Permit us to follow you." They wish to change Allah.s decree: Say: "Not thus(4884) will ye follow us: Allah has already declared(4885) (this) beforehand": then they will say, "But ye are(4886) jealous of us." Nay, but little do they understand (such things).

4883 Now comes out another motive behind the minds of the laggards. The journey for pilgrimage had no promise of war booty. If at any future time there should be a promise of booty they would come! But that is to reverse Allah's law and decree. Jihad is not for personal gain or booty: see S. 8 and Introduction to S. 8, paragraph 2. On the contrary Jihad is hard striving, in war and peace, in the Cause of Allah.

4884 *Not thus: i.e.,* not on those terms; not if your object is only to gain booty.

4885 See 8:1, and n. 1179.

4886 The desert Arabs loved fighting and plunder, and understood such motives for war. The higher motives seemed to be beyond them. Like ignorant men they attributed petty motives or motives of jealousy if they were kept out of the vulgar circle of fighting for plunder. But they had to be schooled, and they were schooled to higher ideas of discipline, self-sacrifice, and striving hard for a Cause.

16. Say to the desert Arabs(4887) who lagged behind: "Ye shall be summoned (to fight) against a people given to(4888) vehement war: then shall ye fight, or they shall submit.(4889) Then if ye show obedience, Allah will grant you a goodly reward, but if ye turn back as ye did before, He will punish you with a grievous Penalty."

4887 While they are reproached for their supineness in the march which led to Hudaybiyah, where there was danger but no prospect of booty, they are promised, if they learn discipline, to be allowed to follow the Banner of Islam where (as happened later in the Persian and Byzantine Wars) there was real fighting with formidable and well-organised armies.

4888 *Cf.* 27:33.

__4889__ That is, you shall go forth to war if you learn discipline, not for booty, but for a great and noble Cause. For if your opponents submit to the Cause, there will be no fighting and no booty.

17. No blame is there on the blind, nor is there blame on the lame, nor on one ill (if he joins not the war): But he that obeys Allah(4890) and his Messenger,- (Allah) will admit him to Gardens beneath which rivers flow; and he who turns back, ((Allah)) will punish him with a grievous Penalty.

__4890__ There may be neither fighting nor booty. But all who obey the righteous Imam's call to Jihad with perfect discipline will get the Rewards of the Hereafter. The blind, the maimed, and the infirm will of course be exempted from active compliance with the Call, but they can render such services as are within their power, and then they will not be excluded from the reward.

18. Allah.s Good Pleasure(4891) was on the Believers when they swore Fealty to thee under the Tree:(4892) He knew(4893) what was in their hearts, and He sent down Tranquillity(4894) to them; and He rewarded them with a speedy Victory;(4895)

__4891__ The noun from the very *radiya is ridwan* (Good Pleasure); hence the name of this *Bay'ah, Bay'at al Ridwan,* the Fealty of Allah's Good Pleasure: see n. 4877 to 48:10.

__4892__ The great ceremony of the Fealty of Allah's Good Pleasure took place while the Prophet sat under a tree in the plain of Hudaybiyah. (R).

__4893__ Or tested: seen. 4855 to 47:31.

__4894__ *Sakinah* = Peace, calm, sense of security and confidence, tranquillity. *Cf.* above 48:4, and n. 4869. The same word is used in connection with the battle of Hunayn in 9:26 , and in connection with the Cave of Thawr at an early stage in the Hijrah: 9:40 .

__4895__ The Treaty of Hudaybiyah itself was a "speedy Victory": it followed immediately after the *Bay'ah.*

19. And many gains will they acquire (besides): and Allah is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

20. Allah has promised you many gains that ye shall(4896) acquire, and He has given(4897) you these beforehand; and He has restrained the hands of men from you; that it may be a Sign for(4898) the Believers, and that He may guide you to a Straight Path;

__4896__ The gains so far seen from the *Bay'ah* and their calm and disciplined behaviour were certainly great; but greater still were to follow in the spiritual sense, in the rapid spread of Islam, in the clearance from the Sacred House of the idolatrous autocracy, and in the universal acceptance of the Message of Allah in Arabia .

__4897__ The first fruits of the *Bay'ah* were the victory or treaty of Hudaybiyah, the cessation for the time being of the hostility of the Makkan Quraysh, and the opening out of the way to Makkah. These things are implied in the phrase. "He has restrained the hands of men from you."

__4898__ Hudaybiyah (in both the *Bay'ah* and the Treaty) was truly a sign post for the Believers: it showed the solidarity of Islam, and the position which the Muslims had won in the Arab world.

21. And other gains (there are), which are not within(4899) your power, but which Allah has compassed: and Allah has power over all things.

__4899__ *Other gains:* these are usually referred to the later victories of Islam, but we must view them not merely in their political or material aspect, but chiefly in the rise of Islam as a world power morally and spiritually.

22. If the Unbelievers should fight you, they would(4900) certainly turn their backs; then would they find neither protector nor helper.

__4900__ Their morale was now truly broken.

23. (Such has been) the law(4901) of Allah already in the past: no change wilt thou find in the practice (approved) of Allah.

__4901__ *Cf.* 33:62.

24. And it is He Who has restrained their hands from you and your hands from them in the midst(4902) of Makka, after that He gave you the victory over them. And Allah sees well all that ye do.

__4902__ Little incidents had taken place that might have plunged Quraysh and the Muslims from Madinah into a fight. On the one hand, Quraysh were determined to keep out the Muslims, which they had no right to do: and on the other hand, the Muslims, though unarmed, had sworn to stand together, and if they had counter-attacked they could have forced their entrance to the Ka'bah, the centre of Makkah. But Allah restrained both sides from anything that would have violated the Peace of the Sanctuary, and after the Treaty was signed, all danger was past.

25. They are the ones who denied Revelation and hindered you from the Sacred Mosque and the sacrificial animals,(4903) detained from reaching their place of sacrifice. Had there not been believing men and believing women whom ye did not know that(4904) ye were trampling down and on whose account a crime would have accrued to you without (your) knowledge, ((Allah) would have allowed you to force your way, but He held back your hands) that He may admit to His Mercy whom He will.(4905) If they had been(4906) apart, We should certainly have punished the Unbelievers among them with a grievous Punishment.

__4903__ The Muslims from Madinah had brought the animals for sacrifice with them, and had put on the *Ihram* or pilgrim's garb (see n. 217 to 2:197), but they were not only prevented from entering Makkah, but were also prevented from sending the sacrificial animals to the place of sacrifice in Makkah, as they could have done under 2:196. The sacrifice was therefore actually offered at Hudaybiyah.

__4904__ There were at the time in Makkah believing Muslims, men and women, and the faith of some of them was unknown to their brethren from Madinah. Had a fight taken place in Makkah, even though the Muslims had been successful, they would unwittingly have killed some of these unknown Muslims, and thus would unwittingly have been guilty of shedding Muslim blood. This was prevented by the Treaty.

__4905__ Allah works according to His wise and Holy will and Plan, and not according to what seems to us, in the excitement of human life, to be the obvious course of things. By preventing a fight He saved many valuable lives, not only of Muslims but also of some who became Muslims afterwards and served Islam. He grants His Mercy on far higher standards than man in his limited horizon can see.

__4906__ If the party from Madinah could have distinguished Muslims from non-Muslims among theMakkans, they might have been allowed to enter and punish the pagan Quraysh for their inordinate vanity and gross breach of the unwritten law of the land. But in the actual circumstances the best solution was the Treaty of Hudaybiyah.

26. While the Unbelievers got up in their hearts heat and cant - the heat(4907) and cant of ignorance,- Allah sent down His Tranquillity(4908) to his Messenger and to the Believers, and made them stick close to the command of self-restraint; and well were they entitled to it(4909) and worthy of it. And Allah has full knowledge of all things.

__4907__ While the Unbelievers were blustering and excited, and meticulously objected to introductory words such as "In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, from Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah" (they did not like the tides), the Prophet remained calm and collected, and got the substance of their demands embodied in the Treaty without worrying about words. Even though the terms of the Treaty appeared to the companions, at first, to be unfair to Muslims, they remained faithful to their Leader and showed trust in his better judgement, a trust that was vindicated by the events that followed. (R).

__4908__ *Cf.* above 48:18, and n. 4894.

4909 *It* = Tranquillity. Their calmness amid much provocation was a gift of Allah; they had earned a right to it by their obedience and discipline, and showed themselves well worthy of it.

27. Truly did Allah fulfil the vision for His Messenger.(4910) ye shall enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah wills, with minds secure, heads shaved, hair cut short, and without fear. For He knew what ye knew not, and He granted, besides this, a speedy victory.(4911)

4910 The Prophet had had a dream that he had entered the Sacred Mosque at Makkah Just before he decided on the journey which resulted in the Treaty of Hudaybiyah. By it he and his people could enter next year without the least molestation and in the full customary garb, with head shaved or hair cut short, and all the customary minor rites of pilgrimage.

4911 See above, 48:18, and n. 4895.

28. It is He Who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion: and enough is Allah for a Witness.(4912)

4912 The divine disposition of events in the coming of Islam and its promulgation by the Prophet are themselves evidence of the truth of Islam and its all-reaching character; for there is nothing which it has not influenced. See also 61:9, n. 5442, and also 9:33 .

29. Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. and those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other.(4913) Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayer), seeking Grace from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure.(4914) On their faces are their marks, (being) the traces(4915) of their prostration. This is their similitude in the Tawrah;(4916) and their similitude in the Gospel is:(4917) like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem, (filling) the sowers with wonder and delight. As a result,(4918) it fills the Unbelievers with rage at them. Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds forgiveness, and a great Reward.

4913 *Cf.* 9:128. The devotees of Allah wage unceasing war against evil, for themselves, and for others; but to their own brethren in faith—especially the weaker ones-they are mild and compassionate: they seek out every opportunity to sympathise with them and help them.

4914 Their humility is before Allah and His Prophet and all who have authority from Allah, but they yield no power or pomp, nor do they worship worldly show or glitter. Nor is their humility before Allah a mere show for men.

4915 The traces of their earnestness and humility are engraved on their faces, *i.e.,* penetrate their inmost being, the face being the outward sign of the inner man. If we take it in its literal sense, the traces might mean the marks left by repeated prostration on their foreheads. Moreover, a good man's face alone shows in him the grace and light of Allah; he is gende, kind and forbearing, ever helpful, relying on Allah and possessing 'a blessed Peace and Calmness' *(i.e., sakinah: cf.* 48:26; 48:18, n. 4894) that can come from no other source. (R).

4916 In the Book of Moses, which is now found in a corrupt form in the Pentateuch, the posture of humility in prayer is indicated by prostration: *e.g.,* Moses and Aaron "fell upon their faces", Num. 16:22 .

4917 The similitude in the Gospel is about how the good seed is sown and grows gradually, even beyond the expectation of the sower: "the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth now how; for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear"; Mark, 4:27-28. Thus Islam was preached by the Prophet; the seed seemed to human eyes lost in the ground; but it put forth its shoot, and grew, and became strong, until it was able to stand on its own legs, and its worst enemies recognised its existence and its right to live. Note how much more complete the parable is in the Qur'an. The mentality of the sowers of the seed is expressed in beautiful terms: its growth and strength filled them "with wonder and delight."

4918 I construe the particle "If as expressing not the object, but the result. The result of the wonderful growth of Islam in numbers and strength was that its enemies were confounded, and raged furiously within their own minds, a contrast to the satisfaction, wonder, and delight of the Prophet and his Companions. The pronoun in "rage at *them*" of course refers to the Prophet and his Companions, and goes back to the earlier words, "on *their faces*" etc.



49. Al Hujurat (The Chambers)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. O Ye who believe! Put not yourselves forward(4919) before Allah and His Messenger. but fear Allah. for Allah is He Who hears and knows all things.

4919 Several shades of meaning are implied: (1) do not make yourselves conspicuous in word or deed when in the presence of Allah *(e.g.* in a Mosque, or at Prayers or religious assemblies); (2) do not anticipate in word or deed what your Leader (Allah's Messenger) may say or do; (3) do not be impatient, trying to hasten things before the time is ripe, of which the best Judge is Allah, Who speaks through His Messenger. Be reverent in all things, as in the presence of Allah: for He hears and sees all things. (4) Look to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him) for guidance and let nothing else take precedence over them. (R).

2. O ye who believe! Raise not your voices(4920) above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him in talk, as ye may speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds become(4921) vain and ye perceive not.

4920 It is bad manners to talk loudly before your Leader. Some ill-mannered people so raise their voices as to drown the voice of their Leader, in conversation or in Council.

4921 Such rudeness may even destroy the value of such services as they may otherwise have been able to render, and all this without their even realising the harm they were doing to the Cause.

3. Those that lower their voices in the presence of Allah's Messenger,- their hearts has Allah tested for piety:(4922) for them is Forgiveness and a great Reward.

4922 The essence of good manners arises from the heart. The man who really and sincerely respects his Leader has true piety in his heart, just as the man who does the opposite may undo the work of years by weakening the Leader's authority.

4. Those who shout out(4923) to thee from without the Inner Apartments -(4923-A) most of them lack understanding.

4923 To shout aloud to your Leader from outside his Chambers shows disrespect both for his person, his time, and his engagements. Only ignorant fools would be guilty of such unseemly behaviour. It is more seemly of them to wait and bide their time until he is free to come out and attend to them. But, in the Court of a spiritual King, much is forgiven that is due to lack of knowledge and understanding. In the earthly Court, ignorance of the Law excuseth no man. If a man behaved in that way to the General of an army or the Governor of a Province, not to speak of an earthly King, he would be laid hands on by the Guard, and could never gain the access he desires.

4923-A *Al Hujurat:* "The Inner Apartments" or "The Chambers."

5. If only they had patience until thou couldst come out to them, it would be best for them: but Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

6. O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes(4924) to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done.

4924 All tittle-tattle or reports—especially if emanating from persons you do not know—are to be tested, and the truth ascertained. If they were believed and passed on, much harm may be done, of which you may have cause afterwards to repent heartily. Scandal or slander of all kinds is here condemned. That about women is specially denounced: 24:11-20; 23-26.

7. And know that among you(4925) is Allah.s Messenger. were he, in many matters, to follow your (wishes), ye would certainly fall into misfortune: But Allah has endeared(4926) the Faith to you, and has made it beautiful in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you Unbelief, wickedness, and rebellion: such indeed are those who walk in righteousness;-

4925 The messenger of Allah, if he consults his friends and associates, should not be expected to follow their advice in all matters. The judgement and responsibility are his: he sees farther than the rest, and he is not swayed by personal feeling as others may be. (R).

4926 Fortunate indeed was the generation among whom the Prophet of Allah walked in his daily life. His example was inspiring. Their inner Faith was dear to them; it was a thing to be proud of in their innermost hearts; and they loved discipline, obedience, and righteousness. No wonder all their other disadvantages were neutralised, and they went from strength to strength. Nothing but the Grace of Allah could have brought about such a result.

8. A Grace and Favour from Allah. and Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom.

9. If two parties among(4927) the Believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of Allah; but if it complies then make peace between them with justice and be fair: for Allah loves those who are fair (and just).

4927 Individual quarrels are easier to compose than group quarrels, or, in the modern world, national quarrels. But the collective community of Islam should be supreme over groups or nations. It would be expected to act justly and try to compose the quarrel, for peace is better than fighting. But if one party is determined to be the aggressor, the whole force of the community is brought to bear on it. The essential condition of course is that there should be perfect fairness and justice and respect for the highest principles; for Islam takes account of every just and legitimate interest without separating spiritual from temporal matters. The League of Nations failed because these essentials were absent and today the United Nations fails for the same reason. (R).

10. The Believers are but a single Brotherhood:(4928) So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy.

4928 The enforcement of the Muslim Brotherhood is the greatest social ideal of Islam. On it was based the Prophet's Sermon at his last pilgrimage, and Islam cannot be completely realised until this ideal is achieved.

11. O ye who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others:(4929) It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the (latter are better than the (former): Nor defame nor be(4930) sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed: And those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong.

4929 Mutual ridicule ceases to be fun when there is arrogance or selfishness or malice behind it. We may laugh *with* people, to share in the happiness of life: we must never laugh *at* people in contempt or ridicule. In many things the may be better than ourselves!

4930 Defamation may consist in speaking ill of others by the spoken or written word, or in acting in such a way as to suggest a charge against some person whom we are not in a position to judge. A cutting, biting remark or taunt of sarcasm is included in the word *lamaza.* An offensive nickname may amount to defamation, but in any case there is no point in using offensive nicknames, or names that suggest some real or fancied defect.They ill accord with the serious purpose which Muslims should have in life. For example, even if a man is lame, it is wrong to address him as "O lame one!" It causes him pain, and it is bad manners. So in the case of the rude remark, "the black man".

12. O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much(4931) (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: And spy not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead(4932) brother? Nay, ye would abhor it...But fear Allah. For Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

4931 Most kinds of suspicion are baseless and to be avoided, and some are crimes in themselves: for they do cruel injustice to innocent men and women. Spying, or enquiring too curiously into other people's affairs, means either idle curiosity, and is therefore futile, or suspicion carried a stage further, which almost amounts to sin. Back-biting also is a brood of the same genus. It may be either futile but all the same mischievous, or it may be poisoned with malice, in which case it is a sin added to sin.

4932 No one would like even to think of such an abomination as eating the flesh of his brother. But when the brother is dead, and the flesh is carrion, abomination is added to abomination. In the same way we are asked to refrain from hurting people's feelings when they are present; how much worse is it when we say things, true or false, when they are absent!

13. O mankind! We created(4933) you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).

4933 This is addressed to all mankind and not only to the Muslim brotherhood, though it is understood that in a perfected world the two would be synonymous. As it is, mankind is descended from one pair of parents. Their tribes, races, and nations are convenient labels by which we may know certain differing characteristics. Before Allah they are all one, and he gets most honour who is most righteous.

14. The desert Arabs say,(4934) "We believe." Say, "Ye have no faith; but ye (only)say, ´We have submitted(4935) our wills to Allah,´ For not yet has Faith entered your hearts. But if ye obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not belittle aught of your deeds: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

4934 The desert Arabs were somewhat shaky in their faith. Their hearts and minds were petty, and they thought of petty things, while Islam requires the complete submission of one's being to Allah. See next verse. Some of the failings of the desert Arabs are described in 48:11-15. But the reference here is said to be to the BanuAsad, who came to profess Islam in order to get charity during a famine.

4935 'This is what ye ought to prove if your faith has any meaning, but ye only say it with your tongues.'

15. Only those are Believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted, but have striven with their belongings and their persons in the Cause of Allah: Such are the sincere ones.

16. Say: "What! Will ye(4936) instruct Allah about your religion? But Allah knows all that is in the heavens and on earth: He has full knowledge of all things.

4936 'You say (or perhaps even think) that you are Muslims, but where are the fruits of your Faith? Allah knows the innermost motives and secrets of your heart, and you cannot deceive Him by attaching a certain label to yourselves.' Alas! that this answer to the desert Arabs is true of so many others in our own times!

17. They impress on thee(4937) as a favour that they have embraced Islam. Say, "Count not your Islam as a favour upon me: Nay, Allah has conferred a favour upon you that He has guided you to the faith, if ye be true and sincere.

4937 Islam in itself is a precious privilege. By accepting it we confer no favour on its preacher or on any community. If the acceptance is from the heart, it is a great favour done to those who accept, that the Light of Allah has entered their hearts and they have received guidance.

18. "Verily Allah Knows(4938) the secrets of the heavens and the earth: and Allah Sees well all that ye do."

4938 This does not mean that we should seek petty motives in newcomers into the House of Islam. That would indeed be harbouring suspicions or allowing curiosity to spy out motives, which would be a crime under 49:12. We should be true, sincere, and devoted ourselves, and leave the case of others to Allah, from Whose eyes nothing is hidden.



50. Qaf

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Qaf:(4939) By the Glorious(4940) Qur´an (Thou art Allah.s Messenger..

4939 This is an Abbreviated Letter. For Abbreviated letters generally, see Appendix I. This particular Abbreviated Letter *Qaf* occurs only here as a single letter, and in combination at the beginning of S. 42, where I was unable to explain the full combination. Here the Qaf is taken by several Commentators to represent *Qudiya al Amr,* "the matter has been decreed," with reference to the eschatological trend of the Surah. Allah knows best.

4940 *Majid* (translated "Glorious") is one of the beautiful appellations of the Qur'an. Its glory is that of the rising sun: the more it rises on your mental and spiritual horizon, the more you are lost in admiration of its glory. Its meanings are manifest and inexhaustible. The greater your experience, the more light is your spiritual eye able to bear. And in that glory is a beauty that none can tell who has not experienced it in his soul. It is itself the proof of the mission of the Prophet.

2. But they wonder that(4941) there has come to them a Warner from among themselves. So the Unbelievers say: "This is a wonderful thing!

4941 In a sense their wonder is natural: do we wonder at the glorious sun? In another sense it is unnatural: what should we say of a man who fails to see in broad daylight?

3. "What! When we die(4942) and become dust, (shall we live again?) That is a (sort of) return far (from our understanding)."

4942 *Cf.* 37:16.

4. We already know how much of them(4943) the earth takes away: With Us is a record guarding (the full account).

4943 The earth only corrupts and takes away the body when they are dead; it has no power over the soul. The full account of the soul's doings is in Allah's Record.

5. But they deny the Truth when it comes to them: so they are in a confused state.(4944)

4944 If they deny what has been made clear to them, their minds must necessarily get into confusion. All nature declares the glory and goodness of Allah. Revelation explains the inequalities of this life and how they will be redressed in the Hereafter. If they do not accept this, they are not in a logical position. They cannot reconcile the known with the unknown.

6. Do they not look at the sky above them?- How We have made it(4945) and adorned it, and there are no flaws in it?

4945 The greatest philosophers have found a difficulty in understanding the sceptical position when they contemplate the wonder and mystery of the skies with all the countless beautiful stars and planets and lights in them, and laws of order, motion, and symmetry, that respond to the highest mathematical abstractions without a flaw. Can blind Chance give rise to such conditions?

7. And the earth- We have spread it out,(4946) and set thereon mountains standing firm, and produced therein every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs)-(4947)

4946 *Cf.* 13:3; and 15:19 and n. 1955. The earth is round, and yet it appears stretched out as a vast expanse, like a carpet kept steady with the weight of the mountains.

4947 *Cf.* 22:5, and n. 2777. Sex in plants may be hinted at: see n. 1804 to 13:3.

8. To be observed and commemorated by every devotee(4948) turning (to Allah..

4948 For all these things go into his very heart and soul. He loves to contemplate them, to remember them for himself as evidence of Allah's goodness and glory, and to mention and proclaim them, in the form of Psalms, Hymns or Dhikr. (R)

9. And We send down from the sky rain charted with blessing, and We produce therewith gardens and Grain for harvests;

10. And tall (and stately)(4949) palm-trees, with shoots of fruit-stalks, piled one over another;-

4949 A beautiful nature passage. How graphic and unforgettable to anyone who has seen a spring and summer in an Arabian oasis!

11. As sustenance for ((Allah)´s) Servants;- and We give (new) life therewith to land that is dead: Thus will be the Resurrection.

12. Before them was denied (the Hereafter) by the People(4950) of Noah, the Companions of the Rass, the Thamud,

4950 Just the names of the peoples of Arabian tradition who were punished for their sins are mentioned; their stories will be found elsewhere. For the *People of Noah,* see 11:25 -48 and other passages. For the *Companions of the Ross, see* 25:38 and n. 3094; for *'Ad* and *Thamud,* see 26:123-158, and other passages; for *Pharaoh* and his People, see 2:49-50 and other passages: for the *Brethren of Lut,* see 7:80-84, and other passages; for the *Companions of the Wood,* see 15:78-79, and n. 2000; and for the *People of Tubba,* see 44:37 and n. 4715.

13. The ´Ad, Pharaoh, the brethren of Lut,

14. The Companions of the Wood, and the People of Tubba´; each one (of them) rejected the messengers, and My warning was duly fulfilled (in them).

15. Were We then weary with the first Creation, that they should be in confused doubt(4951) about a new Creation?

4951 *Cf.* 46:33, and n. 4812.

16. It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul(4952) makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.

4952 Allah created man, and gave him his limited free will. Allah knows inmost desires and motives of man even better than man does himself. He is nearer to a man than the man's own jugular vein. The jugular vein is the big trunk vein, one on each side of the neck, which brings the blood back from the head to the heart. The two jugular veins correspond to the two carotid arteries which carry the blood from heart to the head. As the blood-stream is the vehicle of life and consciousness, the phrase "nearer than the jugular vein" implies that Allah knows more truly the innermost state of our feeling and consciousness than does our own ego.

17. Behold, two (guardian angels)(4953) appointed to learn (his doings) learn (and noted them), one sitting on the right and one on the left.

4953 Two angels are constantly by him to note his thoughts, words, and actions. One sits on the right side and notes his good deeds and the other on the left, to note his bad deeds; corresponding to the Companions of the Right and the Companions of the Left mentioned in 56:27 and 56:41. (R).

18. Not a word does he(4954) utter but there is a sentinel by him, ready (to note it).

4954 Then each "word" spoken is taken down by a "sentinel" *(raqib).* This has been construed to mean that the sentinel only records words, not thoughts which are not uttered. Thoughts may be forgiven if not uttered, and still more if they do not issue in action. At the stage at which we clothe a thought in words, we have already done an action. The Recorders mentioned in the last verse make a complete Record, in order to supply motives and springs of action, which will affect the degrees or status in the spiritual Hereafter. The three together, individuals or kinds, make the honourable Recorders, *Kiraman Katibin,* (plural, not dual number) mentioned in 82:11.

19. And the stupor of death(4955) will bring Truth (before his eyes): "This was the thing which thou wast trying to escape!"

4955 What is stupor or unconsciousness to this probationary life will be the opening of the eyes to the spiritual world: for Death is the Gateway between the two. Once through that Gateway man will realise how the things which he neglected or looked upon as remote are the intimate Realities, and the things which seemed to loom large in his eyes in this world were shadows that have fled. The things we wanted to avoid are the things that have really come to pass. Both Good and Evil will realise the Truth now in its intensity.

20. And the Trumpet(4956) shall be blown: that will be the Day whereof Warning (had been given).

4956 The next stage will be the Judgement, heralded with the blowing of the Trumpet. Every soul will then come forth.

21. And there will come forth every soul: with each will be an (angel) to drive,(4957) and an (angel) to bear witness.

4957 Several interpretations are possible, leading to the same truth, that the Judgement will be set up; the Record will be produced; the good and bad deeds will speak for and against; and complete justice will be done, each act leading to its own due fruit. (1) The (angel) to drive and the (angel) to bear witness may be the Recording Angels of the left and the right (verse 17); or (2) it may not be angels, but the evil deeds will drive like task-masters, and the good deeds will bear witness for the soul on trial; or (3) his misused limbs and faculties will drive him to his doom, while his well-used limbs and faculties will witness for him.

22. (It will be said:) "Thou wast heedless of this; now have We removed thy veil, and sharp is thy sight(4958) this Day!"

4958 The clearness of vision will now be even greater: see n. 4955 above.

23. And his Companion(4959) will say: "Here is (his Record) ready with me!"

4959 *Qarin:* Companion. If we take No. 1 of the constructions suggested in n. 4957, the Companion will be one of the Recording Angels mentioned above, in verse 21, perhaps the one that drives; or perhaps the third one mentioned in verse 18, for he has the Record ready with him. If we take any of the other constructions mentioned in n. 4957, it will be the evil deeds or the misused faculties. In any case it will be the factors on whose testimony his conviction will be based.

24. (The sentence will be:) "Throw, throw(4960) into Hell every contumacious Rejecter (of Allah.!-

4960 The original for "throw", here and in verse 26 below, is in the dual number, which some Commentators explain by saying that the dual form is used for emphasis, as if the verb ("throw, throw") were twice repeated. Examples of this are found in Arabic. But is it possible that the dual refers to the two angels mentioned in verses 17 and 21? In that case the Companions in verse 27 will be the third one mentioned in verses 18 and 23. In any case the third one will be the one on whose Record the sentence will be passed.

25. "Who forbade what was good, transgressed all bounds, cast doubts and suspicions;

26. "Who set up another god beside Allah. Throw him into a severe penalty."

27. His Companion(4961) will say: "Our(4962) Lord! I did not make him transgress,(4963) but he was (himself) far astray."

4961 See last note. But some people understand by "Companion" here an evil associate in the world, an evil one who misled.

4962 *Our Lord.* One man speaks: "I did not", etc. Yet he uses the plural pronoun in saying, "Our Lord". This is beautifully appropriate, as he is speaking so as to include the person to be judged: as if he were to say, "Thou art my Lord, or the Lord of us angels or of all Creation, but Thou art his Lord also, for Thou didst cherish him and warn him, and he owed duties to Thee."

4963 Neither the Recording Angels nor the misused limbs and faculties, nor anything else whatever was responsible for the Evil: it was the personal responsibility of the Doer himself, with his free will.

28. He will say: "Dispute not(4964) with each other in My Presence: I had already in advance sent you(4965) Warning.

4964 It is suggested that sinners whose Record is black, driven into a corner, accuse others of misleading them: the others may be Recorders, or their faculties or opportunities or surroundings or their associates in the world, or anything but themselves. Such recriminations are not allowed in the Court of Judgement.

4965 Besides, personal responsibility had already been clearly preached to them in Allah's Message, and they had been warned of the consequences. 'You" is in the plural number 'all of you who are before the Judgement Seat had clear warning of the consequences of your conduct.'

29. "The Word changes not before Me, and I do not the least injustice to My Servants."(4966)

4966 *'Abd* has two plurals: (1) *'Abid,* as here, means all Servants of Allah, *i.e.,* all his creatures; (2) *'Ibad* has the further connotation of Servants of Allah, devoted to his service; *I* have translated it in many cases by the word "devotees". The Sentence before the Judgement Seat is pronounced with perfect justice: it does not change, and requires no change; the inevitable consequences of sin must follow; the time for Mercy is past.

30. One Day We will ask Hell, "Art thou filled to the full?"(4967) It will say, "Are there any more (to come)?"

4967 As the capacity of Good is unlimited, so is the capacity of Evil-unlimited. Hell is personified and asked, "Art thou sated to the full?" It replies, "If there are more to come, let them come." It is not satisfied.

31. And the Garden(4968) will be brought nigh to the Righteous,- no more a thing distant.

4968 In this life, the ideals of the spirit, the accomplishments of the things in our hearts and our hopes, seem to be ever so far, seem even to recede as we think we come nearer. Not so in the Hereafter. The fruits of righteousness will no longer be in the distance. They will be realised. They will seem themselves to approach the Righteous.

32. (A voice will say:) "This is what was promised for you,- for every one who turned(4969) (to Allah. in sincere repentance, who kept (His Law),

4969 The description of the Righteous is given in four masterly clauses: (1) those who turned away from Evil in sincere repentance; (2) those whose new life was good and righteous; (3) those who in their innermost hearts and in their most secret doings were actuated by God-fearing love, the fear that is akin to love in remembering Allah under His title of "Most Gracious"; and (4) who gave up their whole heart and being to Him.

33. "Who feared (Allah) Most Gracious unseen,(4970) and brought a heart turned in devotion (to Him):

4970 *Cf.* 36:11 and n. 3952; and 35:18, and n. 3902.

34. "Enter ye therein in Peace and Security;(4971) this is a Day of Eternal Life!"

4971 The true meaning of Islam: peace, security, salutation, and accord with Allah's Plan in all Eternity.

35. There will be for them therein all that they wish,- and more besides in Our Presence.(4972)

4972 To get all that our purified wishes and desires comprehend may seem to sum up final Bliss; but there is something still wanting, which is supplied by the Presence of Allah, the Light of His Countenance.

36. But how many generations before them did We destroy (for their sins),- stronger in power(4973) than they? Then did they wander through the land: was there any place of escape (for them)?

4973 While virtue and righteousness will accomplish their final goal, what will be the End of Sin? Let the past tell its story. Many powerful and arrogant generations were swept away, to stray in the paths of misery, without any way of escape from the consequences of their sin. This was already seen in the life of this world. In the world to come, it will be worse, as already stated in verses 24-26 above.

37. Verily in this(4974) is a Message for any that has a heart and understanding or who gives ear and earnestly witnesses (the truth).

4974 As Christ said (Matt. 11:15), "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear". These are matters of high moment. Many spiritual lessons can be learnt from these things by anyone who has the heart and understanding to apply to Allah's teaching and can give genuine thought to what he sees, as a witness does who has to swear to the facts on his oath.

38. We created the heavens(4975) and the earth and all between them in Six Days,(4976) nor did any sense of weariness touch Us.(4977)

4975 Allah's creation of the heavens and the earth in long stages or periods of time, as we count time, shows how things evolve in their own good time. We must therefore be patient if Good does not *seem* to come to its own according to *our* ideas. Our will should merge itself in Allah's Will, and we should praise Him, realising that He is All-Good and that all adjustments will be in the Hereafter.

4976 *Cf.* 7:54 , n. 1031; and 41:12. n. 4477.

4977 *Cf.* 35:35.

39. Bear, then, with patience, all that they say, and celebrate the praises of thy Lord, before(4978) the rising of the sun and before (its) setting.

4978 Allah should be remembered at all times. But the best time for individual adoration is early in the morning before sunrise, late in the day before sunset, and a portion of the night, when there is stillness in the air, and man's spirit loves to commune with things spiritual. Those who would connect this with the five canonical prayers, instituted at a later stage in MadTnah, would take the *Fajr* for the prayer before sunrise, the *Zuhr* and the 'Asr for the afternoon prayers before sunset and the *Maghrib* and the *'Isha'* for the night prayers.

40. And during part of the night, (also,) celebrate His praises, and (so likewise) after the postures(4979) of adoration.

4979 The general meaning of *after the postures of adoration* would be the contemplation and remembrance of Allah after prayers. Those who would connect this passage with the five canonical prayers understand these further prayers "following the *sujud* or postures of adoration" to mean the extra or supernumerary prayers known as *nafl,* also the use of the Rosary or the fingers in remembering the Names of Allah.

41. And listen for the Day(4980) when the Caller will call out from a place quiet near,-(4981)

4980 The Day of Resurrection, when the Call to the souls to arise and come to the Judgement Seat will be immediately answered, and they will arise and come forth. *Cf.* 36:49-53, and notes 3997 and 3999.

4981 In the life of this world it seemed all so remote. In the new life at the Resurrection it will all be so near; for there will be neither time nor space as we know them here.

42. The Day when they will hear a (mighty) Blast(4982) in (very) truth: that will be the Day of Resurrection.

4982 The word *al Say hah* (mighty Blast) is used for the Resurrection (as here) or for the sudden punishment of the guilty on this earth, as in 11:67, where see further references.

43. Verily it is We Who give Life and Death; and to Us is the Final Goal-

44. The Day when the Earth will be(4983) rent asunder, from (men) hurrying out: that will be a gathering together,- quite easy for Us.(4984)

4983 Men will hurry out from all corners of the earth to answer the call, and the earth itself will be rent asunder. In 25:25 the imagery used was the heaven being rent asunder, and angels coming out in ranks: seen. 3082 Cf. also 84:1-4.

4984 It may seem to our material imaginations a difficult task to collect together the souls of all sorts of men, who died in all sorts of conditions at different times, but it will be a different kind of world and creation altogether, and to Allah all things are not only possible but easy.

45. We know best what they(4985) say; and thou art not one to overawe them by force. So admonish with the Qur´an such as fear My Warning!

4985 People may throw all sorts of doubts about the Judgement and the Hereafter. The Prophet's task is not to force them to accept anything. His task is to deliver the Message of the Qur'an, and admonish those who are spiritually fit and ready to receive admonition and to prepare themselves for the new and higher life destined for man.



51. Al Dhariyat (The Winds That Scatter)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the (Winds)(4986) that scatter broadcast;(4987)

4986 Four agencies are mentioned in verses 1 to 4 as evidences or types or symbols of the certainty and unity of a Truth described in verses 5-6. What these agencies are is described by certain adjectival participles, the noun understood being usually taken to be "Winds": the word for Wind *(Rih)* being feminine in Arabic. Some Commentators however understand other nouns as being implied, *e.g.,* angels in all four verses, or different things in each of the four verses. Whatever the agencies are, their different modes of working are evidence of the power and goodness of Allah, the Unity of His Plan, and the certainty of Good and Evil reaching their own destined ends, when Judgement and Justice will have given each one his due. (R).

4987 Winds may blow strong, and scatter particles of dust far and wide; but they do not diminish by one jot the substance of Allah's material creation; on the contrary they help to readjust things. They reshape the configuration of the earth; in the vegetable kingdom they carry seeds about and plant new seeds in old soils; in the region of air they produce mighty changes in temperature and pressure that affect animal and vegetable life; they carry the moisture of equatorial Africa to the parched plains of India; and so on. Yet they are just one little agency showing Allah's working in the material world. So in the spiritual world. Revelation works mighty changes; it may be resisted, but the resistance will be swept away; it ever points to the one Great Final Event, "to which the whole Creation moves".

2. And those that(4988) lift and bear away heavy weights;

4988 The things that lift and bear away heavy weights may be the Winds that carry the heavy rain clouds or that sweep off every resistance from their path, or it may be the heavy moisture-laden clouds themselves. So works Revelation: it lifts and sweeps away the burdens of custom, superstition, or man's inertia, and ever leads onwards to the destined End.

3. And those that(4989) flow with ease and gentleness;

4989 These may be Winds that fill the sails of ships with gentle and favourable breezes, that carry men and merchandise to their destinations. Or they may be the ships themselves, whose smooth motion through the waters is described in many places by the *verb jani,* "to flow", *e.g., Cf.* 2:164.

4. And those that(4990) distribute and apportion by Command;-

4990 These may be Winds (or other agencies) that distribute and apportion moisture or rain or atmospheric pressure to other blessings of Allah—not haphazard but by fixed laws, *i.e.,* according to the Command of their Lord. So with Revelation. Its blessings are distributed all around, and it produces its marvelous effects sometimes in the most unlikely places and ways.

5. Verily that which ye(4991) are promised is true;

4991 *That which ye are promised:* the Promise of Allah about Mercy and Forgiveness to the Penitent, and Justice and Penalty to the Rebellious; the promise of the Hereafter; the promise that all does not end here, but that there is a truer and more lasting world to come, for which this is but a preparation.

6. And verily Judgment(4992) and Justice must indeed come to pass.

4992 .Din=the giving to each person his precise and just due; this is implied in Judgement and Justice. All the inequalities of this life are to be redressed.

7. By the Sky with (its) numerous Paths,(4993)

4993 The study of the numerous regular orbits of the planets and irregularly regular orbits of comets, and the various motions, visible or invisible, of the fixed stars or revolving stars, form in themselves a network of knowledge or science, of a highly technical nature; the highest astronomy or mathematics can only barely reach its fringe. But these have all a fixed Plan and Purpose under Allah's Dispensation. In them variety leads to Unity. In contrast look at the confused medley of doctrines, views, and dicta put forward by the Sceptics, as described in the next verse.

8. Truly ye are in a doctrine discordant,(4994)

4994 *Qawl* = saying, word, theory, doctrine. *Mukhtalif*= differing, various, inconsistent with itself, discordant. No theory or doctrine based on a denial of a Hereafter can be consistent with spiritual facts as we know them, or with Allah's Goodness, Justice, and Mercy.

9. Through which are deluded (away from the Truth) such as would be deluded.(4995)

4995 Some Commentators draw from this a rigid doctrine of Calvinistic Predestination or Determinism, which I do not think is fairly deducible from the words. *"Yu'fak"* should I think be translated *"will be* or *would be deluded",* meaning "have the wish or desire to be", and not "must necessarily be deluded by eternal predestination". The word occurs in many places in the Qur'an: *e.g., Cf.* 5:75, or 9:30.

10. Woe to the falsehood-mongers,-

11. Those who (flounder) heedless(4996) in a flood of confusion:

4996 They are in great spiritual danger: yet they care not.

12. They ask, "When will be the Day of Judgment and Justice?"

13. (It will be) a Day when they will be tried (and tested) over the Fire!

14. "Taste ye your trial! This is what ye used to ask to be hastened!"(4997)

4997 They used to say scoffingly, "if there is to be punishment for our sins, let it come at once!" When it comes, they will know what a terrible thing it is! Cf. 26:204 n. 3230.

15. As to the Righteous, they will be in the midst of Gardens and Springs,(4998)

4998 Gardens and Springs are the two most frequent symbols for the highest satisfaction and bliss.

16. Taking joy in the things which their Lord gives them, because, before then, they lived a good life.

17. They were in the habit(4999) of sleeping but little by night,

4999 They were engaged most of the night in worship and in the planning of good deeds. They preferred activity to idleness, the service of Allah and His creatures to the indulgence of Self.

18. And in the hour of early dawn, they (were found) praying for Forgiveness;(5000)

5000 They were up early before dawn, ready for their devotions. The praying for Forgiveness and Mercy does not necessarily imply that they had committed fresh sins. Indeed they *began* the day with such devotions, showing their great humility before Allah and their anxious care for others, for whom they prayed as much as for themselves. See the last sentence of n. 21 to 1:5.

19. And in their wealth and possessions (was remembered) the right of the (needy,) him who asked, and him who (for some reason) was(5001) Prevented (from asking).

5001 True charity remembers not only those in need who ask, but also those who are prevented by some reason from asking. The man of true charity seeks out the latter. There may be various reasons which prevent a man from asking for help: (1) he may be ashamed to ask, or his sense of honour may prevent him from asking; (2) he may be so engrossed in some great ideal that he may not think of asking; (3) he may even not know that he is in need, especially when we think of wealth and possessions in a spiritual sense, as including spiritual gifts and talents; (4) he may not know that you possess the things that can supply his needs; and (5) he may be a dumb and helpless creature, whether a human being or a dumb animal, or any creature within your ken or power. Charity in the higher sense includes all help, from one better endowed to one less well endowed. *Cf.* n. 179 to 2:177; also 2:273-274, and notes 322 and 323.

20. On the earth are signs for those of assured Faith,

21. As also in your own(5002) selves: Will ye not then see?

5002 The Signs and Evidence of Allah are in all nature and within the body and soul of man, if man has but the spiritual eyes to see. *Cf.* 41:53.

22. And in heaven is(5003) your Sustenance, as (also) that which ye are promised.

5003 "Sustenance", here as elsewhere, includes physical sustenance, as well as spiritual sustenance. Similarly heaven or sky has both the physical and the spiritual meaning. The physical sustenance grows from rain from the sky; the spiritual sustenance comes from divine aid, grace, and mercy, and includes the Good News and the Warning which come from Revelation about the Hereafter. *(Cf.* n. 4554).

23. Then, by the Lord(5004) of heaven and earth, this is the very Truth, as much as the fact that ye can speak intelligently to each other.

5004 Attention having been called to the Signs or Evidences of Allah's working on the earth, within ourselves, and in the heavens, in verses 20-22, an appeal is made to our own inner conscience, in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth, to acknowledge and act up to the truth of Revelation, and turn to the spiritual Realities. For they are as real as our own conscious and self-intelligent existence, on which is based all our knowledge. As a philosopher (Descartes) has said: "I think; therefore I am."

24. Has the story(5005) reached thee, of the honoured guests of Abraham?

5005 *Cf.* 11:69-73 and notes, where further details of the story will be found. *Cf.* also 15:51 -56.

25. Behold, they entered(5006) his presence, and said: "Peace!" He said, "Peace!" (and thought, "These seem) unusual people."(5007)

5006 They were angels, who appeared suddenly before him at his tent door in the guise of men, and saluted him with the salutation of peace. He returned the salutation, but felt, from their appearance and their manner, that they were unusual, not ordinary, strangers.

5007 *Munkar,* unknown, uncommon, unusual, not customary, (hence by derived meaning, not applicable here, not fair or just): opposite in both primary and secondary meanings to *ma'ruf,* well-known, usual, customary, just. *Cf.* 15:62.

26. Then he turned quickly(5008) to his household, brought out a fatted calf,

5008 They seemed unusual strangers, but he said nothing and quietly proceeded to perform the rites of hospitality. He brought a roast fatted calf and placed it before them to eat. But the strangers did not eat (11:70). This disconcerted him. According to the laws of hospitality, a stranger under your roof is under your protection, but if he refuses to eat, he refuses your hospitality and keeps himself free from any ties of guest and host. "What were their designs?" thought Abraham, and he felt some distrust. But they were angels and could not eat. They declared themselves, and announced the birth to Abraham of a son endowed with wisdom—in other words that Abraham was to be the head of a long line of Prophets! (15:53).

27. And placed it before them.. he said, "Will ye not eat?"

28. (When they did not eat), He conceived a fear of them. They said, "Fear not," and they gave him glad tidings of a son endowed with knowledge.

29. But his wife came forward(5009) (laughing) aloud: she smote her forehead and said: "A barren old woman!"

5009 Abraham's wife Sarah was old and barren. This news seemed to her too good to be true. She came forward, laughed aloud (11:71), struck her forehead with her hands, indicative of her amusement and incredulity as "a barren old woman": 11:72.

30. They said, "Even so(5010) has thy Lord spoken: and He is full of Wisdom and Knowledge."

5010 The angels said: "What may sound improbable to human beings will yet come to pass if Allah commands. And Allah thy Lord has spoken. So shall it be. For all His promises are full of wisdom and knowledge." But the application is for all time and to all human affairs. Never despair. However much Truth may be in the shade, it will shine with full splendour. And the Judgement will come, when good will come to its own! [Eds.].

31. (Abraham) said: "And what, O ye Messengers, is your errand (now)?"

32. They said, "We have been sent to a people (deep) in sin;-

33. "To bring on, on them, (a shower of) stones of clay (brimstone),(5011)

5011 *Cf.* 11:82, and n. 1052 to 7:84. The angels' errand of mercy to Abraham (to announce the succession of godly men in his line) *was* coupled with their errand of justice and punishment to the people of Lut, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who were deep in the most abominable and unnatural sins. So Allah's *Mercy* and Justice go hand in hand in all human affairs. Faith has nothing to fear, and wickedness has only to turn and repent, to obtain Allah's Mercy.

34. "Marked as from thy Lord(5012) for those who trespass beyond bounds."

5012 *Cf.* 11:83, and n. 1580. Every crime has its due punishment as marked out in the decrees of Allah.

35. Then We evacuated(5013) those of the Believers who were there,

5013 The only just or righteous persons found in Sodom and Gomorrah (Cities of the Plain by the Dead Sea) were in the house of Lut, who was the Prophet sent to call them to repentance. He and his believing family and adherents were told to leave in due time, and the wicked were destroyed in a shower of brimstone.

36. But We found not there any just (Muslim) persons except in one house:(5014)

5014 That was the house of Lut; and even there, his wife had no faith: she disobeyed the Command and perished: 11:81, n. 1577.

37. And We left there a Sign for such as fear the Grievous Penalty.(5015)

5015 *The Grievous Penalty:* that is, the Final Judgement. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in this life is taken as the type of the Final Judgement. The vestiges can be seen—as a Sign and a Warning—in the sulphury plain round the Dead Sea : *Cf.* 15:79.

38. And in Moses(5016) (was another Sign): Behold, We sent him to Pharaoh, with authority manifest.

5016 *Cf.* 44:17-31. The story of Moses and Pharaoh is here just referred to. The points emphasised here are: (1) that Moses had manifest authority, yet Pharaoh doubted; (2) that Pharaoh's reliance was on his Chiefs and his forces, but they could not help when his doom came; and (3) that in the most extraordinary and incredible ways (judged by ordinary human standards), his arrogance and his reliance on his Chiefs and forces were his undoing.

39. But (Pharaoh) turned back with his Chiefs, and said, "A sorcerer, or one possessed!"

40. So We took him and his forces, and threw them into the sea; and his was the blame.(5017)

5017 The ungodly Egyptians were all destroyed, but the chief blame lay on Pharaoh for misleading them. Pharaoh's punishment was just. He could not blame anyone else. And certainly no one can blame the course of Allah's Justice, for Allah was long-suffering, and gave him many chances to repent.

41. And in the ´Ad (people)(5018) (was another Sign): Behold, We sent against them the devastating Wind:

5018 *Cf.* 46:21 -26. The point here is that the 'Ad were a gifted people: Allah had given them talents and material wealth: but when they defied Allah, they and all their belongings were destroyed in a night, by a hurricane which they thought was bringing them the rain to which they were looking forward. How marvelously Allah's Providence works, to help the good and destroy the wicked!

42. It left nothing whatever that it came up against, but reduced it to ruin and rottenness.

43. And in the Thamud(5019) (was another Sign): Behold, they were told, "Enjoy (your brief day)(5020) for a little while!"

5019 See the story of the Thamud and their prophet Salih in 7:73-79. Here the point is the suddenness of their punishment and its unexpected nature.

5020 Salih, their prophet, gave them three days' clear warning for repentance (11:65). But they heeded him not. On the contrary they flouted him and continued in their evil courses.

44. But they insolently defied(5021) the Command of their Lord: So the stunning noise(5022) (of an earthquake) seized them, even while they were looking on.

5021 They had already defied the order to preserve the She-camel, which was symbolical of the grazing rights of the common people: see 11:64-65 and n. 1560. They continued to flout the warnings of the prophet until the earthquake came on them with a stunning noise and buried them where they were: 7:78; and 11:67.

5022 *Sa'iqah:* a stunning sound like that of thunder and lightning (2:55); such a sound often accompanies an earthquake, (see 41:17, n. 4485, and 7:78 and n. 1047).

45. Then they could not even stand (on their feet),(5023) nor could they help themselves.

5023 They were swept off in the earthquake.

46. So were the People(5024) of Noah before them for they wickedly transgressed.

5024 The generation of Noah was swept away in the Flood for their sins: 7:59 -64. The point is that such a flood seemed so unlikely to them that they thought Noah was "wandering in his mind" when he delivered Allah's Message: 7:60.

47. With power and skill(5025) did We construct the Firmament: for it is We Who create the vastness of pace.

5025 If you do not wish to go back to the wonderful things of the past, which show the power and goodness of Allah, and His justice supreme over all wrongdoing, look at the wonderful things unfolding themselves before your very eyes! (1) The space in the heavens above! Who can comprehend it but He Who made it and sustains it? (2) The globe of the earth under your feet! How great its expanse seems over sea and land, and spread out for you like a wonderful carpet or bed of rest! (3) All things are in twos: sex in plants and animals, by which one individual is complementary to another; in the subtle forces of nature, Day and Night, positive and negative electricity, forces of attraction and repulsion: and numerous other opposites, each fulfilling its purpose, and contributing to the working of Allah's Universe: and in the moral and spiritual world, Love and Aversion, Mercy and Justice, Striving and Rest, and so on—all fulfilling their functions according to the Artistry and wonderful Purpose of Allah. Everything has its counterpart, or pair, or complement. Allah alone is One, with none like Him, or needed to complement Him. These are noble things to contemplate. And they lead us to a true understanding of Allah's Purpose and Message.

48. And We have spread out the (spacious) earth: How excellently We do spread out!

49. And of every thing We have created pairs:(5026) That ye may receive instruction.

5026 See (3) in the last note. *Cf.* 36:36, n. 3981.

50. Hasten ye then (at once)(5027) to Allah. I am from Him a Warner to you, clear and open!

5027 If you understand Nature arid yourselves aright, you will know that Allah is all-in-all, and you will fly at once to Him. This is the teaching which the Prophet of Allah has come to give you, in clear terms and openly to all.

51. And make not another(5028) an object of worship with Allah. I am from Him a Warner to you, clear and open!

5028 Verses 50 and 51, ending with the same clause to emphasise the connection between the two, should be read together. The Prophet's mission was (and is): (1) to show us the urgent need for repentance; and (2) to wean us from the precipice of false worship. The one convinces us of sin and opens the door to the Mercy of Allah; the other cures us of the madness of paying court to idle or worthless objects of desire: for in the worship of Allah, the One True God, is included the best service to ourselves and our fellow-creatures. If fully understood, this sums up the whole duty of man: for it leads us by the right Path to the love of Allah and the love of man and of all creatures.

52. Similarly, no messenger came to the Peoples before them, but they said (of him) in like manner, "A sorcerer, or one possessed"!(5029)

5029 They said this of Moses: 51:39. And they said this of the Prophet: 38:4; 44:14.

53. Is this the legacy(5030) they have transmitted, one to another? Nay, they are themselves a people transgressing beyond bounds!

5030 There is a tradition of Evil as there is a tradition of Good. The ways of Evil in dealing with the teachers of Truth are similar in all ages. But such evil traditions

would have no effect, were it not that the generation following them is itself ungodly, "transgressing beyond bounds."

54. So turn away(5031) from them: not thine is the blame.

5031 When the Prophet freely proclaims his Message, it is not his fault if obstinate wickedness refuses to listen. He can leave them alone, but he should continue to teach for the benefit of those who have Faith.

55. But teach (thy Message) for teaching benefits the Believers.

56. I have only created(5032) Jinns and men, that they may serve Me.

5032 Creation is not for idle sport or play: 21:16 . Allah has a serious Purpose behind it, which, in our imperfect state, we can only express by saying that each creature is given the chance of development and progress towards the Goal, which is Allah. Allah is the source and centre of all power and all goodness, and our progress depends upon our putting ourselves into accord with His Will. This is His service. It is not of any benefit to Him: (see the next two verses)--it is for our own benefit.

57. No Sustenance do I require(5033) of them, nor do I require that they should feed Me.

5033 *Sustenance,* in both the literal and the figurative sense: so also "Feed Me" at the end of the verse. Allah is independent of all needs. It is therefore absurd to suppose that He should require *any* Sustenance, and still more absurd to suppose that *we* can feed Him! The gifts, the Sustenance, the goodness, all come from His side.

58. For Allah is He Who gives (all) Sustenance,- Lord of Power,-(5034) Steadfast (for ever).

5034 Allah commands all power; therefore any power we seek must be from Him. And His power is steadfast, the same today as yesterday, and forever. Therefore His help is always sure.

59. For the Wrong-doers, their portion is like unto the portion of their(5035) fellows (of earlier generations): then let them not ask Me to hasten (that portion)!

5035 Each generation, that acts like any of its predecessors, must meet a similar fate. If the wicked came to an evil end in the past, the same results will follow in the present and the future. The punishment will come suddenly enough: let them not in mockery ask that it should be hastened.

60. Woe, then, to the Unbelievers, on account of that Day(5036) of theirs which they have been promised!

5036 That is, their eternal Punishment in the Hereafter, as well as any punishment that may come to them in this life.



52. Al Tur (The Mount)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the Mount (of Revelation);(5037)

5037 The adjuration is by five things which we shall presently explain. An appeal is made to these five Signs in verses 1 to 6, and the certainty of future events is asserted in the most emphatic terms in verses 7 to 28, in three parts, *viz.,* the coming of judgement and the passing away of this phenomenal world (verses 7-10); the future ill consequences of ill-deeds done (verses 11-16); and future attainment of bliss and complete realisation of Allah's love and mercy (verses 17-28).

2. By a Decree inscribed(5038)

5038 See last note. The five Signs to which appeal is made are: (1) the Mount (of Revelation), (verse 1; (2) the Decree Inscribed, verses 2-3; (3) The Much-frequented Fane, verse 4; (4) the Canopy Raised High, verse 5; and (5) the Ocean filled with Swell, verse 6.

Let us examine these in detail. Each of them has a figurative and a mystic meaning. (1) The Mount is the sublime world of Revelation. In the case of Moses it is typified by Mount Sinai: *Cf.* 95:2, where it is mentioned in juxtaposition to the sacred territory of Makkah , 95:3. In the case of Jesus it is the Mount of Olives : *Cf.* 95:1, and also Matt. 24:3-51, where Jesus made his striking pronouncement about the Judgement to come. In the case of Muhammad, it is the Mountain of Light , where the divine inspiration made him one with the spiritual world: *Cf.* C. 31, and n. 11 (2). The Decree Inscribed is Allah's Eternal Decree. When it becomes Revelation to man, it is further described as "inscribed", reduced to writing; and as it is made clear to the intelligence of man, it is further described as "in a scroll unfolded", that is, spread out so that everyone who has the will can seek its guidance.

3. In a Scroll unfolded;

4. By the much-frequented Fane;(5039)

5039 See the last two notes. (3) "The much-frequented Fane" (or House) is usually understood to mean the Ka'bah, but in view of the parallelism noted in the last note, it may be taken generally to mean any Temple or House of Worship dedicated to the true God. It would then include the Tabernacle of the Israelites in the wilderness, the Temple of Solomon , the Temple in which Jesus worshipped, and the Ka'bah which the Prophet purified and rededicated to true worship. These would be only illustrations. Other concrete places of worship would be included, and in a more abstract meaning, the heart of man, which craves, with burning desire, to find and worship Allah. The Fane is "much-frequented" as there is a universal desire in the heart of man to worship Allah, and his sacred Temples draw large crowds of devotees.

5. By the Canopy Raised High;(5040)

5040 (4) "The Canopy Raised High" is the canopy of heaven, to whose height or sublimity no limit can be assigned by the mind of man. It is Nature's Temple , in which all Creation worships Allah-the Symbol in which the material and the visible merges into the spiritual and the intuitional.

6. And by the Ocean(5041) filled with Swell;-(5042)

5041 (5) The Ocean--the vast, limitless, all encircling Ocean--is the material symbol of the universal, unlimited, comprehensive nature of the invisible spiritual world. It is expressed to be *masjur,* full of a mighty swell, boiling over, poured forth all over the earth, as if overwhelming all landmarks; *Cf.* 81:6-a fitting description of the final disappearance of our temporal world in the supreme establishment of the Reality behind it.

5042 This completes the five Signs or Symbols by which man may know for certain of the Judgement to come. Note that they are in a descending order--the highest, or most remote from man's consciousness, being mentioned first, and that nearest to man's consciousness being mentioned last. The truth of Revelation; its embodiment in a Prophet's Message given in human language; the universal appeal of divine worship; the starry world above; and the encircling Ocean, full of life and motion below--all are evidences that the Day of Allah will finally come, and nothing can avert it. (R).

7. Verily, the Doom of thy Lord will indeed come to pass;-

8. There is none can avert it;-

9. On the Day when(5043) the firmament will be in dreadful commotion.

5043 The Day of J udgement is typified by two figures. (1) "The firmament will be in dreadful commotion." The heavens as we see them suggest to us peace and tranquillity, and the power of fixed laws which all the heavenly bodies obey. This will all be shaken in the rise of the new spiritual world. *Cf.* Matt. 26:29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." For (2) see next note.

10. And the mountains will fly hither and thither.(5044)

5044 (2) The mountains are a type of firmness and stability. But things that we think of as firm and stable in this material life will be shaken to pieces, and will be no more substantial than a mirage in a desert. *Cf.* 78:20.

11. Then woe that Day to those that treat (Truth) as Falsehood;-(5045)

5045 That Day will be a Day of Woe to the wrongdoers described in two aspects, the rebels against Allah and Allah's Truth, just as it will be a Day of Joy and Thanksgiving to the Righteous, who are described in three aspects in verses 17 to 28. The rebels are here described as being those who openly defied Truth and plunged into wrongdoing, or who trifled with truth, who jested with serious matter, who had not the courage to plunge openly into wrongdoing but who secretly took profit out of it, who wasted their life in doubts and petty quibbles. It is difficult to say which attitude did more harm to themselves and to others. Both are aspects of deep-seated sin and rebellion. But the mercy of Allah was open to all if they had repented and amended their lives.

12. That play (and paddle) in shallow trifles.

13. That Day shall they be thrust down to the Fire of Hell, irresistibly.

14. "This:, it will be said,(5046) "Is the Fire,- which ye were wont to deny!

5046 In face of the Realities, it will be borne in on them how wrong it was for them in this life to deny or forget that every wicked thought or deed had its own retributive chain of consequences.

15. "Is this then a fake,(5047) or is it ye that do not see?

5047 Perhaps they had said that the Hereafter was a fake, mere old wives' tales! If they had given serious thought to the Signs of Allah, they would have been saved from that serious spiritual blindness: then they will see that the fault was their own, and that the warnings of the messengers of Truth were nothing but pure Truth,

16. "Burn ye therein: the same is it to you whether ye bear it with patience, or not:(5048) Ye but receive the recompense of your (own) deeds."

5048 At that stage they will have no justification for anger or impatience; for their whole position will have been due to their own conduct and their rejection of Allah's Grace. Nor will there be time for patience or repentance, for their period of probation will then have been over.

17. As to the Righteous,(5049) they will be in Gardens, and in Happiness,-

5049 The Righteous will be in Bliss far beyond their merits: their sins and faults will be forgiven by the grace of Allah, which will save them from the penalties which they may have incurred from human frailty. It will be their own effort or striving which will win them Allah's grace: see verse 19 below. But the fruits will be greater than they could strictly have earned.

18. Enjoying the (Bliss) which their Lord hath bestowed on them, and their Lord shall deliver them from the Penalty of the Fire.

19. (To them will be said:)(5050) "Eat and drink ye, with profit and health,(5051) because of your (good) deeds."

5050 The bliss of the Righteous is described in three aspects: (1) their individual bliss, verses 17-20; (2) their social bliss, verses 21-24; and (3) their satisfaction in the dissipation of past shadows, and their full understanding of the goodness of Allah, verses 25-28.

5051 Individual satisfaction is expressed in three types or figures of speech. (1) eating and drinking. (2) thrones of dignity, and (3) the joy of individual companionship. But the eating and drinking will not be like the physical acts, which are subject to drawbacks, such as excess, aftereffects and satiety: here there will be pure health, profit, and enjoyment. So about the other two: see the notes following. *Cf.* with this the symbolical description of heaven in 37:40-49: while the general account is the same, special phases are brought out in two passages to correspond with the context.

20. They will recline (with ease) on Thrones (of dignity) arranged in ranks;(5052) and We shall join them to Companions, with beautiful big and lustrous eyes.(5053)

5052 Every one will have a Throne of dignity, but it does not follow that the dignity will be the same. Every one's Personality will be purified but it will not be merged into one general sameness.

5053 *Cf.* 44:54, and notes 4728 and 4729, where the meaning of *Hur* is fully explained. This is the special sharing of individual Bliss one with another. The next verse refers to the general social satisfaction shared with all whom we lived in this earthly life.

21. And those who believe and whose families(5054) follow them in Faith,- to them shall We join their families: Nor shall We deprive them (of the fruit) of aught of their works: (Yet) is each individual in pledge for his deeds.(5055)

5054 *Dhurriyah:* literally, progeny, offspring, family: applied by extension to mean all near and dear ones whether related or not. Love is unselfish, and works not merely, or chiefly, for Self, but for others; provided the others have Faith and respond according to their capacities or degrees, they will be joined on to the Head of the Group, even though on individual merits their rank might be less. This applies specially to a Prophet and his *Ummah* (or following).

5055 As already explained in the last note, though the love poured out by Prophets, ancestors, decendants, friends, or good men and women, will secure for their loved ones the enjoyment of their society, it is an indispensable condition that the loved ones should also, according to their lights, have shown their faith and their goodness in deeds. Each individual is responsible for his conduct. In the kingdom of heaven there is no boasting of ancestors or friends. But it is part of the satisfaction of the good ones who poured out their love that those who were in any way worthy to receive their love should also be admitted to their society, and this satisfaction shall in no wise be diminished to them.

22. And We shall bestow on them, of fruit and meat,(5056) anything they shall desire.

5056 Note that this verse is embedded in the midst of the description of *social* bliss; the individual bliss figured by meat and drink has already been mentioned in verse 19 above. The social pleasure will be of any kind or quantity they shall desire, but their desires will then be purified, just as their pleasures will be on a different plane. (R).

23. They shall there exchange, one with another, a (loving) cup free of frivolity,(5057) free of all taint of ill.

5057 Drinking or loving cups, in our life on this earth, are apt to be misused in two ways: (1) they may be occasions for mere frivolity or the wasting of time; (2) they may lead to evil thoughts, evil suggestions, evil talk, or evil deeds. (R).

24. Round about them will serve, (devoted) to them. Youths (handsome) as Pearls(5058) well-guarded.

5058 *Maknun:* well-guarded, kept close, concealed from exposure: the beautiful nacreous lustre of Pearls is disfigured by exposure to gases, vapours, or acids; when not actually in use they are best kept in closed caskets, guarded from deteriorating agencies. (R).

25. They will advance(5059) to each other, engaging in mutual enquiry.

5059 The third-and the highest-stage of Bliss, after individual Bliss and social Bliss, is the satisfaction of looking to the Past without its shadows and realising to the full in the Present the goodness of Allah. See n. 5050. This, again, is shared in mutual converse and confidence.

26. They will say: "Aforetime, we were not without fear for the sake of our people.(5060)

5060 A man may be good, and may with limits have found goodness in his own spiritual life, but may have anxieties about his family or friends whom he loves. All such shadows are removed in heaven by the Grace of Allah, and he is free to dwell in it in this confidential converse with other men similarly circumstanced.

27. "But Allah has been good to us, and has delivered us from the Penalty of the Scorching Wind.(5061)

5061 "Us" includes the good man or woman and all whom he or she cared for. This would be an ever-expanding circle, until it includes all mankind through Teachers like the Chosen One. The "Scorching Wind" is the type of haste, arrogance, and fire, such as entered into the composition of Jinns: 15:27 . The destiny of man is to attain to calm, peace, security, the Garden of Bliss .

28. "Truly, we did call unto Him from of old: truly it is He, the Beneficent, the Merciful!"(5062)

5062 'Before this, we called upon Him, in faith that He is good: now we know in our inmost souls that He is indeed good-the Beneficent, the Merciful.' This is the climax of the description of Heaven.

29. Therefore proclaim thou(5063) the praises (of thy Lord): for by the Grace of thy Lord, thou art no (vulgar) soothsayer, nor art thou one possessed.

5063 The greatest of the Prophets was called a soothsayer, *i.e.,* one who tells fortunes by divination, or a madman possessed of some evil spirit, or a poet singing spiteful satires. Much more may lesser men be called by such names because they proclaim the Truth. They should go on in spite of it all. (R).

30. Or do they say:- "A Poet! we await for him some calamity(5064) (hatched) by Time!"

5064 If a spiteful poet foretells evil calamities for men, men can afford to laugh at him, hoping that Time will bring about its revenge, and spite will come to an evil end. For the various meanings of *Rayb,* see n. 1884 to 14:9. Some Commentators suggest Death as the Calamity hatched by Time.

31. Say thou: "Await ye!- I too will wait(5065) along with you!"

5065 *Cf. 9 :52 .* If the wicked wait or look for some calamity to befall the preacher of Truth, the preacher of Truth can with far more justice await the decision of the issue between him and his persecutors. For he stands for right, and Allah will support the right.

32. Is it that their faculties of understanding urge them(5066) to this, or are they but a people transgressing(5067) beyond bounds?

5066 It may be that the persecutors of Truth are ignorant, and their deficient faculties of understanding mislead them, but it is more often the case that they are perverse rebels against the law of Allah, defending their own selfish interests, and preventing those whom they oppress, from getting justice.

5067 *Qf.* 51:53.

33. Or do they say, "He fabricated the (Message)"? Nay, they have no faith!(5068)

5068 As an alternative to the charges of being a soothsayer or a madman or a disgruntled poet, there is the charge of a forger or fabricator applied to the Prophet of Allah when he produces his Message. This implies that there can be no revelation or inspiration from Allah. Such an attitude negatives Faith altogedier. But if this is so can they produce a work of man that can compare with the inspired Word of Allah? They cannot (*Cf.* 2;23, 10:37 -39, 11:13 , and 17:88).

34. Let them then produce a recital like unto it,- If (it be) they speak the truth!

35. Were they created of nothing,(5069) or were they themselves the creators?

5069 *Were they created of nothing?* Three possible alternative meanings are suggested by the Commentators, according to the meaning we give to the Arabic preposition *min* = of, by, with, for. (1) 'Were they created by nothing? Did they come into existence of themselves? Was it a mere chance that they came into being? (2) Were they created as men out of nothing? Was there not a wonderful seed, from which their material growth can be traced, as the handiwork of a wise and wonderful Creator? Must they not then seek His Will? (3) Were they created for nothing, to no purpose? If they *were* created for a purpose, must they not try to learn that purpose by understanding Allah's Revelation?

36. Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Nay, they have no firm belief.(5070)

5070 They obviously did not create the wonders of the starry heavens and the fruitful globe of the earth. But they can assign no definite cause to explain it, as they have no firm belief on the subject themselves.

37. Or are the Treasures of thy Lord with them,(5071) or are they the managers (of affairs)?

5071 *Cf.* 6:50 , and n. 867. The Treasures of Allah's Knowledge are infinite. But the doubters and unbelievers have no access to them, much less can the doubters and unbelievers manage the wonders of this world. Must they not therefore seek grace and revelation from Allah?

38. Or have they a ladder,(5072) by which they can (climb up to heaven and) listen (to its secrets)? Then let (such a) listener of theirs produce a manifest proof.

5072 *Cf.* 6:35 : a reference to the Pagan belief that by means of a material ladder a man might climb up to heaven and learn its secrets!

39. Or has He only daughters(5073) and ye have sons?

5073 *Cf.* 16:57-59, and n. 2082. To the gospel of Unity it is repugnant to assign begotten sons or daughters to Allah. But the Arab superstition about angels being the daughters of Allah was particularly blasphemous as the Pagan Arabs hated to have daughters themselves and considered it a mark of humiliation! (see also 53:21).

40. Or is it that thou dost ask for a reward,(5074) so that they are burdened with a load of debt?-

5074 The Prophets of Allah ask for no reward to preach the Message of Allah and direct men to the right Path. Why then do men shun them and persecute those who seek to bring blessings to them? *(Cf. n.* 5627).

41. Or that the Unseen(5075) in it their hands, and they write it down?

5075 The Unseen in the spiritual world is a subject of Revelation, though it works through the common everyday life of man. The men who reject Revelation simply because it is outside their own experience ought on the contrary to try to learn about it and seek to understand it.

42. Or do they intend a plot (against thee)?(5076) But those who defy Allah are themselves involved in a Plot!

5076 Shallow men who plot against Good are themselves the willing victims of insidious plots laid by Evil.

43. Or have they a god(5077) other than Allah. Exalted is Allah far above the things they associate with Him!

5077 This is the final and decisive question: Is there really any god other than Allah the One True God? Every argument points to the negative. A series of questions has been asked pointing to the negative of the superstitions of the godless. The gospel of Unity, Revelation, and the Hereafter had thus been preached by a searching examination of the position of the Unbelievers. And the Surah ends with an exhortation to leave alone those who will not believe because

they wish not to believe, and to let Time work out the web and pattern of Allah's Plan.

44. Were they to see a piece of the sky(5078) falling (on them), they would (only) say: "Clouds gathered in heaps!"

5078 In 26:187, Shu'ayb, the Prophet of Allah, is challenged by the Companions of the Wood "to cause a piece of sky to fall on us, if thou art truthful." Such a challenge, in some form or other, is addressed to all Prophets of Allah. It is mere defiance. It has no meaning. If a piece of the sky were to fall on them, it would not convince them, for they would only say: "These are only clouds gathered in heaps." They do not wish to believe. Otherwise there are ample Signs and Evidences of Allah's Plan in Creation and in man's own heart.

45. So leave them alone until they encounter that Day of theirs, wherein they shall (perforce) swoon (with terror),-(5079)

5079 That is, the Day of Judgement. *Cf.* 39:68, and n. 4343.

46. The Day when their plotting will avail them nothing and no help shall be given them.

47. And verily, for those who do wrong, there is another punishment besides this:(5080) But most of them understand not.

5080 The final Judgement is for all. But in addition, wrongdoers have to fear a retribution or punishment in this very life, an open punishment through external events or, at least the bitter pangs of conscience within.

48. Now await in patience the command of thy Lord: for verily thou art in Our eyes:(5081) and celebrate the praises of thy Lord the while thou standest forth,(5082)

5081 The messenger of Allah must strive his utmost to proclaim the Message of Allah: as for results, it is not for him to command them. He must wait patiently, in the knowledge that he is not forgotten by Allah, but is constantly under Allah's eyes—under His loving care and protection. And he must glorify Allah's name, as he is a standard-bearer of Allah's Truth.

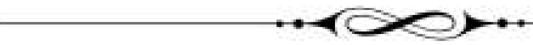
5082 The translators and Commentators nearly all understand *taqumu* in the sense of rising up from sleep. But the rendering I have given is consistent with Qur'anic usage. In 26:218, we have the same two words *hina taqumu,* meaning "standing forth (in prayer)". In 57:25, we have *ti yaqumu al nas bil al qist,* which obviously means "that men may stand forth in J ustice," *i.e.,* do all their business injustice. In 78:38, we have *yaqumu* used for the angels standing forth in ranks.

On my rendering the meaning will be: 'celebrate Allah's praises when you stand forth in prayer, or at all times when you go about your business; but also for part of the night and at early dawn when worldly life is at a standstill.'

49. And for part of the night(5083) also praise thou Him,- and at the retreat(5084) of the stars!

5083 It is not necessary to understand this for any particular canonical prayers. It is good to spend a part of the night in prayer and praise: *Cf.* 73:6. And the Dawn is a daily recurring miracle of nature, full of spiritual influences and "testimony": *Cf.* 17:78-79.

5084 *Idbar al nujum:* the retreat of the stars: the glorious hour of early dawn. In 113:1, we seek Allah's protection as "Lord of the Dawn".



53. Al Najm (The Star)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the Star(5085) when it goes down,-

5085 *Najm* is interpreted in various ways. As most commonly accepted, it means either a Star genetically, or the close cluster of seven stars known as the Pleiades in the Constellation Taurus, which the sun enters about the 21st of April every year. In mid-April, or a little later, the beautiful cluster would set just after the sun, after having gradually ascended the sky in the winter months. In late May, or a little later, it would rise just before the sun. In its western aspects, it might be considered a spring constellation. To open-air nations (including the Arabs) whose climate usually presents starry skies, this is an object of great interest, and many folklore tales gather round it. When so glorious a cluster is content to bow down in the horizon and merge its light in the greater light created by Allah (see the last three lines of C. 228), it becomes a symbol of humility in beauty and power before the Most High, Whose revelation discloses the summit of beauty, power and wisdom. *Hawa* in the text may mean either "goes down (or sets)" or "rises". Whichever meaning we take, it makes no difference to the symbolic interpretation given above.

2. Your Companion is neither(5086) astray nor being misled.

5086 'Your Companion" is the Prophet Muhammad, who had lived among the Quraysh all his life. He is defended from three kinds of charges that the Unbelievers brought against him: (1) that he was going astray, either through defect of intelligence or through carelessness; (2) that he was being misled or deceived by evil spirits; and (3) that he spoke out of a whim or impulse, or from a selfish desire to impress his own personality. None of these charges were true. On the contrary he had direct inspiration from Allah.

3. Nor does he say (aught) of (his own) Desire.

4. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him:

5. He was taught by one(5087) Mighty in Power,

5087 This is referred by the Commentators to the angel Gabriel, through whom the inspiration came. *Cf.* 81:20.

6. Endued with Wisdom: for he appeared (in stately form);

7. While he was in the highest part(5088) of the horizon:

5088 Gabriel appeared in stately form, perhaps towering above the Mountain of Light (see C. 31). *Istawa* in verse 6, translated "appeared", means literally "mounted" or "ascended", or "set himself to execute a design": seen. 1386 to 10:3.

8. Then he approached and came closer,

9. And was at a distance of but two bow-lengths(5089) or (even) nearer;

5089 Two bow-shots (counting 100 to 150 yards to a bow-shot) would be a clearly visible distance. (R).

10. So did (Allah) convey(5090) the inspiration to His Servant- (conveyed) what He (meant) to convey.

5090 Gabriel would be just a messenger, to do no more than convey Allah's Message to Allah's Messenger.

11. The (Prophet´s) (mind and) heart in no way falsified(5091) that which he saw.

5091 "Heart" in Arabic includes the faculty of intelligence as well as the faculty of feeling. The impression conveyed was pure truth; there was no illusion in it.

12. Will ye then dispute with him concerning what he saw?

13. For indeed he saw him at a second descent,(5092)

5092 The first occasion when Gabriel appeared in a visible form was at the Mountain of Light , when he brought his first revelation beginning *with Iqra':* see C. 29-35. The second was at the Prophet's *Mi'raj* or Ascension: see Introduction to S. 17, paras. 2-4. These were the only two occasions when Gabriel appeared in visible form. (R).

14. Near the Lote-tree(5093) beyond which none may pass:

5093 For the Lote-tree in its literal meaning, see n. 3814 to 34:16. The wild Lote is thorny; under cultivation it yields good fruit and shade, and is symbolic of heavenly bliss, as here and in 56:28.

15. Near it is the Garden of Abode.(5094)

5094 The " Garden of Abode " *(Jannat al-Ma'wa)* lies close to the Lote-tree and, in the opinion of some authorities, is so called because the souls of believers will find their abode therein. [Eds.].

16. Behold, the Lote-tree was shrouded (in mystery unspeakable!)

17. (His) sight never swerved, nor did it go wrong!

18. For truly did he see, of the Signs of his Lord, the Greatest!

19. Have ye seen(5095) Lat. and ´Uzza,

5095 From the heights of divine Glory, we come back again to this sorry earth, with its base idolatries. We are asked to "look at this picture, and at that!" The three principal idols of Pagan Arab Idolatry were the goddesses Lat, 'Uzza, and Manat, Opinions differ as to their exact forms: one version is that Lat was in human shape, 'Uzza had its origin in a sacred tree, and Manat in a white stone. (R).

20. And another, the third (goddess), Manat?

21. What! For you(5096) the male sex, and for Him, the female?

5096 To show Allah in human shape, or imagine sons or daughters of Allah, as if Allah were flesh, was in any case a derogation from the supreme glory of Allah, high above all creatures, even if the human shapes were invested with great beauty and majesty as in the Greek Pantheon. But when we consider in what low opinion Pagan Arabia held the female sex, it was particularly degrading to show Allah, or so-called daughters of Allah, in female shapes. *Cf.* 16:57 -59, and n. 2082; also 52:39, and n. 5073.

22. Behold, such would be indeed a division most unfair!

23. These are nothing but names which ye have devised,-(5097) ye and your fathers,- for which Allah has sent down no authority (whatever). They follow nothing but(5098) conjecture and what their own souls desire!- Even though there has already come to them Guidance from their Lord!

5097 *Cf.* 7:71; 12:40 , n. 1693. The divine names which they give to stocks and stones, or to heroes living or dead, or even to prophets and men of God, are but the creatures of their own fancy. Whatever they were, they were not gods.

5098 *Cf.* 6:116. Conjecture is a dangerous thing in speaking of divine things. It follows lines which reflect the lusts of men's own hearts. Why not follow the divine guidance which comes through the prophets of Allah?

24. Nay, shall man have (just) anything he hankers after?(5099)

5099 The unpurified desires of men's hearts often lead to destruction, for they are dictated by *'Evil.* The true source of guidance and light is Allah, just as He is also the goal to which all persons and things-all existence-re turns.

25. But it is to Allah that the End and the Beginning (of all things) belong.

26. How many-so-ever be the angels in the heavens,(5100) their intercession will avail nothing except after Allah has given(5101) leave for whom He pleases and that he is acceptable to Him.

5100 We are apt to imagine the angelic host of heaven as beings of immense power. But their power is all derived from Allah. Men, when they attain to the highest spiritual dignities, may have even more power and position than angels in the sight of Allah, as is typified by angels bidden to bow down to Adam: 2:34. The Quraysh superstition about angels being intermediaries and intercessors for man with Allah is condemned.

5101 *Cf.* 20:109 and 21:28 . No one can intercede except with the permission of Allah, and that permission will only be given for one who is acceptable to Allah. For a possible different shade of meaning, see n. 2634 to 20:109.

27. Those who believe not in the Hereafter, name the angels with female names.(5102)

5102 *Cf.* 53:21 above, and n. 5096. The Pagan Quraysh had no firm belief in the Hereafter. Their prayers for intercession to angels and deities was on account of their worldly affairs.

28. But they have no knowledge therein. They follow nothing but conjecture; and conjecture(5103) avails nothing against Truth.

5103 *Cf.* 53:23 above, and n. 5098.

29. Therefore shun those who turn away from Our Message and desire nothing but the life of this world.

30. That is as far as(5104) knowledge will reach them. Verily thy Lord knoweth best those who stray from His Path, and He knoweth best those who receive guidance.

5104 Men with a materialist turn of mind, whose desires are bounded by sex and material things, will not go beyond those things. Their knowledge will be limited to the narrow circle in which their thoughts move. The spiritual world is beyond their ken. While persons with a spiritual outlook, even though they may fail again and again in attaining their full ideals, are on the right Path. They are willing to receive guidance and Allah's Grace will find them out and help them.

31. Yea, to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: so that He rewards those who do(5105) evil, according to their deeds, and He rewards those who do good, with what is best.

5105 All deeds have their consequences, good or ill. But this is not an iron law, as the Determinists in philosophy, or the preachers of bare Karma, would have us believe. Allah does not sit apart. He governs the world. And Mercy as well as Justice are His attributes. In His Justice every deed or word or thought of evil has its consequence for the doer or speaker or thinker. But there is always in this life room for repentance and amendment. As soon as this is forthcoming, Allah's Mercy comes into action. It can blot out our evil, and the "reward" which it gives is nearly always greater than our merits.

32. Those who avoid great sins and shameful deeds, only (falling into) small faults,- verily thy Lord is

ample(5106) in forgiveness. He knows you well when He brings you out of the earth, And when ye are hidden in your mothers´ wombs. Therefore justify not yourselves:(5107) He knows best who it is that guards against evil.

5106 Allah's attributes of Mercy and Forgiveness are unlimited. They come into action without our asking, but on our bringing our will as offerings to Him. Our asking or prayer helps us to bring our minds and wills as offering to Him. That is necessary to frame our own psychological preparedness. It informs Allah of nothing for He knows all.

5107 As Allah knows our inmost being, it is absurd for us to justify ourselves either by pretending that we are better than we are or by finding excuses for our conduct. We must offer ourselves unreservedly such as we are: it is His Mercy and Grace that will cleanse us. If we try, out of love for Him, to guard against evil, our striving is all that He asks for.

33. Seest thou one(5108) who turns back,

5108 The particular reference in this passage, according to Baydawi is to Al Walid ibn al Mughirah, who bargained with a Quraysh Pagan for a certain sum if the latter would take upon himself the sins of Al Walid. He paid a part of the sum but withheld the rest. The general application that concerns us is threefold: (1) if we accept Islam, we must accept it whole-heartedly and not look back to Pagan superstitions; (2) we cannot play fast and loose with our promises and (3) no man can bargain about spiritual matters for he cannot see what his end will be unless he follows the law of Allah, which is the law of righteousness.

34. Gives a little, then hardens (his heart)?

35. What! Has he knowledge of the Unseen so that he can see?(5109)

5109 'So that he can see what will happen in the Hereafter': for no bargains can be struck about matters unknown.

36. Nay, is he not acquainted with what is in the books(5110) of Moses-

5110 *Books of Moses:* apparendy not the Pentateuch, in the *Tawrah,* but some other book or books now lost. For example, the Book of the Wars of Jehovah is referred to in the Old Testament (Num. 21:14) but is now lost. The present Pentateuch has no clear message at all of a Life to come.

37. And of Abraham(5111) who fulfilled his engagements?-(5112)

5111 No original *Book of Abraham* is now extant. But a book called "The Testament of Abraham" has come down to us which seems to be a Greek translation of a Hebrew original. See n. 6094 to 87:19, where the Books of Moses and Abraham are again mentioned together.

5112 One of the titles of Abraham is *Hanif,* the True in Faith: *Cf.* 16:120, 123.

38. Namely, that no bearer(5113) of burdens can bear the burden of another;

5113 Here follows a series of eleven aphorisms of ancient wisdom apparently incorporated in current Semitic folklore. The first is that a man's spiritual burden—die responsibility for his sin—must be borne by himself and not by another: *Cf.* 6:164; 17:15 ; 35:18; 39:7. There can be no vicarious atonement.

39. That man can have nothing but what he strives for;

40. That (the fruit of) his striving(5114) will soon come in sight:

5114 The second and third aphorisms are that man must strive, or he will gain nothing; and that if he strives, the result must soon appear in sight and he will find his reward in full measure.

41. Then will he be rewarded with a reward complete;

42. That to thy Lord is the final Goal;(5115)

5115 The fourth, fifth, and sixth aphorisms are that all things return to Allah; that all our hope should be in Him and we should fear none but Him; and that He alone can give Life and Death.

43. That it is He Who granteth Laughter and Tears;

44. That it is He Who granteth Death and Life;

45. That He did create in pairs,- male and female,(5116)

5116 The seventh aphorism relates to the mystery of sex: all things are created in pairs: each sex performs its proper function, and yet its wonderful working is part of the creative process of Allah: the living seed fructifies, but contains within itself all the factors disclosed in its later development and life.

46. From a seed when lodged (in its place);

47. That He hath promised a Second Creation (Raising of the Dead);(5117)

5117 No less wonderful is the promise He has made about the raising of the dead, and a new life in the Hereafter, and this is the subject of the eighth aphorism.

48. That it is He Who giveth wealth and satisfaction;(5118)

5118 Wealth and material gain are sought by most men, in the hope that they will be a source of enjoyment and satisfaction. But this hope is not always fulfilled. There is a psychical and spiritual side to it. But both the material and the spiritual side depend upon the working of Allah's Plan. This is referred to in the ninth aphorism.

49. That He is the Lord of Sirius (the Mighty Star);(5119)

5119 The tenth aphorism refers to a mighty phenomenon of nature, the magnificent star Sirius, which is such a prominent object in the skies, in the early part of the solar year, say, from January to April. It is the brightest star in the firmament, and its bluish light causes wonder and terror in Pagan minds. The Pagan Arabs worshipped it as a divinity. But Allah is the Lord, Creator and Cherisher, of the most magnificent part of Creation, and worship is due to Him alone.

50. And that it is He Who destroyed the (powerful) ancient ´Ad (people),(5120)

5120 The eleventh and last aphorism refers to the punishment of the most powerful ancient peoples for their sins. For the 'Ad people, see n. 1040 to 7:65, and for Thamud, see n. 1043 to 7:73. They were strong; and they were talented: but their strength and their talents did not save them from being destroyed for their sins. The same may be said about the earlier generation of Noah, who were destroyed in the Flood: they "rejected Our Signs: they were indeed a blind people" (7:64); see also n. 1039 to 7:59; and 11:25-49. *Ancient 'Ad (people):* some Commentators construe, *First 'Ad people,* distinguishing them from the later 'Ad people, a remnant that had their day and passed away.

51. And the Thamud nor gave them a lease of perpetual life.

52. And before them, the people of Noah, for that they were (all) most unjust and most insolent transgressors,

53. And He destroyed the Overthrown Cities(5121) (of Sodom and Gomorrah).

5121 Verses 53-60 may be construed as a commentary on the aphorisms. The story of the Overthrown Cities, to which Lot was sent for a warning, will be found in 11:74-83 and the notes thereon. This story may well be treated as separate from the aphorisms as it refers to events that happened in the later life of Abraham.

54. So that (ruins unknown) have covered them up.

55. Then which of the gifts(5122) of thy Lord, (O man,) wilt thou dispute about?

5122 With a slight modification this forms the refrain of the next Surah but one, the highly poetical Surah of *Al Rahman.* In S. 54:15, 17 etc., there is a similar refrain in different words. Every gift and benefit you have is from Allah, and to save you from the just punishment of your sins, Allah at all times sends revelations and Messengers to warn you. Why not accept Allah's Grace instead of disputing about it?

56. This is a Warner,(5123) of the (series of) Warners of old!

5123 The Prophet before Quraysh (and before us) continues the line of messengers of Allah who have come to teach mankind and lead men into unity and righteousness. Shall we not listen to his voice? Every day that passes, the Judgement approaches nearer and nearer. But Allah alone can say at what precise hour it will come to any of us. It is certain, and yet it is a mystery, which Allah alone can lay bare.

57. The (Judgment) ever approaching draws nigh:

58. No (soul) but Allah can lay it bare.

59. Do ye then wonder(5124) at this recital?

5124 Mere wondering will not do, even if it is the wonder of admiration. Each soul must strive and act, and Allah's Mercy will take it under its wings.

60. And will ye laugh(5125) and not weep,-

5125 The higher issues of Life and the Hereafter are serious, and therefore all that we do in this life is serious and important. We must shun inanities and frivolities. It is no laughing time. If we only realised our own shortcomings, we should weep, with our good angels who weep for us. But weeping by itself will not help. We must try and understand Allah and adore Him. Thus shall we be able to understand ourselves and our fellow-men.

61. Wasting your time in vanities?

62. But fall ye down in prostration to Allah, and adore (Him)!(5126)

5126 And so we are invited to prostrate ourselves and adore Him. For this is the true end of Revelation and the true attitude when we understand the world, Nature, History and the working of Allah's Plan.



54. Al Qamar (The Moon)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. The Hour (of Judgment)(5127) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder.(5128)

5127 See paragraph 2 of the Introduction to S. 53. The idea of the judgement being nigh at the beginning of this Surah connects it with the same idea at the end of the last Surah (verse 57), though the actual words used in the two cases are different.

5128 Three explanations are given in the *Mufradat,* and perhaps all three apply here: (1) that the moon once appeared cleft asunder in the valley of Makkah within sight of the Prophet, his Companions, and some Unbelievers; (2) that the prophetic past tense indicates the future, the cleaving asunder of the moon being a Sign of the Judgement approaching; and (3) that the phrase is metaphorical, meaning that the matter has become clear as the moon. That the first was noticed by contemporaries, including Unbelievers, is clear from verse 2. The second is an incident of the disruption of the solar system at the New Creation: *Cf.* 75:8-9. And the third might well be implied as in eastern allegory, based on the other two.

2. But if they see a Sign, they turn away, and say, "This is (but) transient magic."(5129)

5129 *Mustamirr:* transient, or powerful: either meaning will apply. The Unbelievers acknowledge the unusual appearance, but call it magic. They do not therefore profit by the spiritual lesson.

3. They reject (the warning) and follow their (own) lusts but every matter has(5130) its appointed time.

5130 The prevalence of sin and the persecution of truth may have its day, but it must end at last.

4. There have already come to them Recitals wherein(5131) there is (enough) to check (them),

5131 The stories of the sins of past generations having been visited with exemplary punishments were already in their possession, and should, if they had been wise, have opened their eyes and checked them in their mad career of sin. Five of these stories are again referred to later in this Surah by way of illustration.

5. Mature wisdom;- but (the preaching of) Warners profits them not.

6. Therefore, (O Prophet)(5132) turn away from them. The Day that the Caller(5133) will call (them) to a terrible affair,

5132 For a time godlessness seems to triumph, but the triumph is short-lived. And in any case there is the great Reckoning of the Day of Judgement.

5133 The angel whose voice will call at the Resurrection and direct all souls. *Cf.* 20:108-111.

7. They will come forth,- their eyes humbled - from (their) graves, (torpid)(5134) like locusts scattered abroad,

5134 At one stage in the invasion of locust swarms, the locusts are torpid and are scattered abroad all over the ground. I have seen them on railway tracks in ' Iraq , crushed to death in hundreds by passing trains. The simile is apt for the stunned beings who will rise up in swarms from their graves and say, 'Ah! woe unto us! who had raised us up?" (36:52).

8. Hastening, with eyes transfixed, towards the Caller!- "Hard is this Day!", the Unbelievers will say.

9. Before them the People of Noah rejected (their messenger): they rejected Our servant,(5135) and said, "Here is one possessed!", and he was driven out.

5135 The story of Noah and the Flood is frequently referred to in the Qur'an. The passage which best illustrates this passage will be found in 11:25 -48. Note in that passage how they first insult and abuse him arrogantly; how he humbly argues with them; how they laugh him to scorn, as much as to say that he was a madman possessed of some evil spirit; and how the Flood comes and he is saved in the Ark, and the wicked are doomed to destruction.

10. Then he called on his Lord: "I am one overcome: do Thou then help (me)!"(5136)

5136 He did not call down punishment. He merely asked for help in his mission, as he felt himself overpowered by brute force and cast out, which prevented the fulfilment of his mission. But the wicked generation were past all repentance, and they were wiped out.

11. So We opened the gates of heaven, with water pouring forth.

12. And We caused the earth to gush forth with springs, so the waters met (and rose)(5137) to the extent decreed.

5137 The torrents of rain from above combined with the gush of waters from underground springs, and caused a huge Flood which inundated the country *(Cf.* 11:40 and 23:27).

13. But We bore him on an (Ark) made of broad planks and caulked(5138) with palm- fibre:

5138 *Dusur,* plural of *disar,* which means the palm fibre with which boats are caulked: from *dasara,* to ram in, to spear. A derived meaning is "nails", (which are driven into planks): this latter meaning also applies, and is preferred by translators not familiar with the construction of simple boats.

14. She floats under our eyes (and care): a recompense(5139) to one who had been rejected (with scorn)!

5139 As usual, Allah's Mercy in saving His faithful servants takes precedence of His Wrath and Penalty. And He helps and rewards those whom the world rejects and despises!

15. And We have left this as a Sign(5140) (for all time): then is there any that will receive admonition?(5141)

5140 *Cf.* 29:15, where the Ark (with the salvation it brought to the righteous) is mentioned as a Sign for all Peoples. So also in 25:37 and 26:121, it is a Sign for men. Similarly the saving of Lot , with the destruction of the wicked Cities of the Plain, is mentioned as a Sign left for those who would understand: 29:35 and 51:37.

5141 A refrain that occurs six times in this Surah: see Introduction.

16. But how (terrible) was(5142) My Penalty and My Warning?

5142 While the Mercy of Allah is always prominently mentioned, we must not forget or minimise the existence of Evil, and the terrible Penalty it incurs if the Grace of Allah and His Warning are deliberately rejected.

17. And We have indeed made the Qur´an easy(5143) to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition?

5143 While the Qur'an sums up the highest philosophy of the inner life, its simple directions for conduct are plain and easy to understand and act upon. Is this not in itself a part of the Grace of Allah? And what excuse is there for anyone to fail in receiving admonition?

18. The ´Ad (people) (too) rejected (Truth): then how terrible was My Penalty and My Warning?

19. For We sent against them(5144) a furious wind, on a Day of violent Disaster,

5144 *Cf.* 41:16. How graphic is the description of the tornado that uprooted them! It must indeed be a dreadful tornado that plucks up the palm trees by their tap-roots. The "Day" is an indefinite period of time. The wind that destroyed the 'Ad people lasted seven nights and eight days: 69:7.

20. Plucking out men as if they were roots of palm-trees torn up (from the ground).

21. Yea, how (terrible) was My Penalty and My Warning!(5145)

5145 Repeated from verse 18 to heighten the description of the sin, the penalty, and the criminal negligence of the sinners in refusing the warnings on account of their self-complacent confidence in their own strength and stability! It is repeated again as a secondary refrain in 54:30 and (with slight modification) in 54:37 and 39.

22. But We have indeed made the Qur´an easy to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition?

23. The Thamud (also) rejected (their) Warners.

24. For they said: "What!(5146) a man! a Solitary one from among ourselves! shall we follow such a one?(5147) Truly should we then be straying in mind, and mad!

5146 The psychology of Thamud is more searchingly analysed here than in 41:17, to show up the contrast between shallow men's ideas about Revelation, and the real sanity, humanism, social value, and truth of Revelation. To them the Revelation was brought by Salih.

5147 Because the Preacher is one among so many, and different from them, although brought up among themselves **,** it is made a cause of reproach against him, when it should have been an index leading to a searching of their hearts and an examination of their ways.

25. "Is it that the Message is sent to him, of all people amongst us? Nay, he is a liar, an insolent one!"(5148)

5148 Pure abuse, as a contrast to Salih's expostulation! See 26:141-158, and notes.

26. Ah! they will know on the morrow, which is the liar, the insolent one!

27. For We will send the she-camel(5149) by way of trial for them. So watch them, (O Salih), and possess thyself in patience!

5149 See n. 1044 to 7:73, for the she-camel as a trial or test among selfish people who tried to monopolise water and pasture as against the poor.

28. And tell them that the water is to be divided between them:(5150) Each one´s right to drink being brought forward (by suitable turns).

5150 See 26:155-156. All were to have water in due turn. It was to be no one's monopoly. And certainly the gates were not to be shut against the poor or their cattle.

29. But they called to their companion, and he took a sword in hand, and hamstrung (her).

30. Ah! how (terrible) was My Penalty and My Warning!

31. For We sent against them(5151) a single Mighty Blast, and they became like the dry stubble used by one who pens cattle.(5152)

5151 See n. 1047 to 7:78, and *Cf.* the same phrase "single Blast" used for the signal for the Resurrection in 36:53. In the case of Thamud, the destruction seems to have been by a severe earthquake accompanied with a terrible rumbling noise.

5152 They became like dry sticks such as are used by herdsmen in making pens or enclosures for their cattle.

32. And We have indeed made the Qur´an easy to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition?

33. The people of Lut(5153) rejected (his) warning.

5153 **The story of Lot (Lut) and the Cities of the Plain has been frequently referred to. See 11:74-83.**

34. We sent against them a violent Tornado with showers of stones,(5154) (which destroyed them), except Lut´s household: them We delivered by early Dawn,-

5154 *Hasib: a violent* tornado bringing a shower of stones. The word occurs here; in 17:68 (without reference to any particular place); in 29:40 (where it seems to

refer to Lot 's Cities, see n. 3462); and in 67:17 (where again there is no reference to a particular place). In Lot 's Cities the shower was of brimstone: see 11:82.

35. As a Grace from Us: thus do We reward those who give thanks.(5155)

5155 "Giving thanks" to Allah in Quranic phrase is to obey Allah's Law, to do His Will, to practise righteousness, to use all gifts in His service.

36. And (Lut) did warn them(5156) of Our Punishment, but they disputed about the Warning.

5156 *Cf.* 11:78-79.

37. And they even sought to snatch away his guests(5157) from him, but We blinded their eyes. (They heard:) "Now taste ye My Wrath and My Warning."

5157 Lot had been preaching to them some time against their iniquities. The crisis of their fate came when the two angels came to Lot in the guise of handsome young men. The men of the whole City came in an uproar, assaulted his house, and tried to snatch away the two handsome men. Lot tried to prevent them, but was powerless. Darkness fell on their eyes, as the first stage in their punishment, and before next morning the wicked cities were buried under a shower of brimstone. Lot and his believing household were saved.

38. Early on the morrow an abiding Punishment seized them:

39. "So taste ye My Wrath and My Warning."

40. And We have indeed made the Qur´an easy to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition?

41. To the People(5158) of Pharaoh, too, aforetime, came Warners (from Allah..

5158 The Egyptian people of old are the last people mentioned in this Surah as an example of iniquity meeting with punishment. And the moral is driven home to the Pagan Quraysh, to warn them of their fate if they persisted in their evil lives. The Egyptians had many Signs given them. They were gifted people and had made much progress in the sciences and the arts. They could have learnt from history that when the highest virtues disappear, the nation must fall. Moses was brought up among them and commissioned to give Allah's Message to them. But they were arrogant; they were unjust to Allah's creatures; they followed debasing forms of worship; they mocked at Truth; and were at last punished with destruction in the Red Sea for their arrogant leaders and army. See 10:75-90 for a narrative.

42. The (people) rejected all Our Signs; but We seized them with such Penalty (as comes) from One Exalted in Power, able to carry out His Will.

43. Are your Unbelievers, (O Quraish), better than they?(5159) Or have ye an immunity in the Sacred Books?

5159 If the Egyptians with all their power and science were unable to resist the punishment of their sins, the Pagan Quraysh are asked: how will you fare when you come to a trial of strength against Allah's Truth? You are not specially favoured so as to be immune from Allah's Law. And if you rely on your numbers, they will be a broken reed when the trial comes, as indeed happened at the Battle of Badr.

44. Or do they say: "We acting together can defend ourselves"?

45. Soon will their multitude be put to flight, and they will show their backs.

46. Nay, the Hour (of Judgment) is the time promised them (for their full recompense):(5160) And that Hour will be most grievous and most bitter.

5160 The calculations of unjust men—on their science, their resources, their numbers, etc.—will in many cases be falsified even in this world, as stated in the last two verses, but their real Punishment will come with Judgement, *i.e.,* when they find their real place in the spiritual world at the restoration of true values. It will then be a most grievous and bitter experience for them, throwing into the shade any calamities they may suffer in this life.

47. Truly those in sin are the ones straying in mind, and mad.(5161)

5161 *Cf.* 54:24 above. Note how the tables are turned in the argument by the repetition. The unjust think that the godly are wandering in mind and mad. They will find that it is really they who were wandering in mind, and mad, even when they were in the plenitude of their power and in the enjoyment of all the good things of this life. These minor echoes heighten the effect of the major refrain mentioned in the Introduction.

48. The Day they will be dragged through the Fire on their faces,(5162) (they will hear:) "Taste ye the touch of Hell!"

5162 *On their faces:* the Face is the symbol of Personality. Their whole Personality will be subverted and degraded—in the midst of the Fire of Suffering.

49. Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure.(5163)

5163 Allah's Creation is not haphazard. Everything goes by law, proportion, and measure. Everything has its appointed time, place, and occasion, as also its definite limitation. Nothing happens but according to His Plan, and every deed, word, and thought of man has its fullest consequences, except insofar as the Grace and Mercy of Allah intervenes, and that is according to law and plan. *(Cf.* 2:117).

50. And Our Command is but a single (Act),-(5164) like the twinkling of an eye.

5164 While in the life of created things there is "proportion and measure", and a lag of time or distance or circumstance, in Allah's Command, the Design, the Word, the Execution, and the Consequences are but a single Act. The simile given is that of the twinkling of an eye, which is the shortest time that a simple man can think of: the cause which occasions the twinkling, the movement of the muscles connected with it, the closing of the eyelids, and their reopening, are all almost like a simultaneous act. By way of contrast take an illustration like that of a man writing a book. He must form the design in his mind; he must prepare himself by research, collection of knowledge, or of personal experience: he must use or acquire the art of writing; he must collect the material for writing, *viz.,* paper, ink, pen, etc., and this will connect with a chain of manufacturing processes in which he is dependent upon other people's work and experience; then his book may have to be printed or lithographed or bound, and sold, or taken to a library, or presented to a friend, which will bring into play numerous other chains of processes, and dependence upon other people's work or skill; arid the lag of Time, Space, and Circumstance will occur at numerous stages. In Allah's Command, the word "Be" *(kun)* includes everything, without the intervention, of or dependence upon any other being or thing whatever. And this is also another phase of the philosophy of Unity.

51. And (oft) in the past, have We destroyed gangs(5165) like unto you: then is there any that will receive admonition?(5166)

5165 *Ashya 'akum:* 'gangs or parties or collection of men like you'—addressed to wicked men who arrogantly rely upon their own strength or combination, neither of which can stand for a moment against the Will of Allah.

5166 The cases of Pharaoh's men of old and the Pagan Quraysh are considered as parallel, and an appeal is addressed to the latter from the experience of the former: 'will ye not learn and repent?'

52. All that they do is noted in (their) Books (of Deeds):(5167)

5167 The point is that nothing which men do is lost—good or evil. Everything gives rise to an inevitable chain of consequences, from which a release is only obtained by the intervention of Allah's Grace acting on an act, a striving of the human will to repent and turn to Allah. (R).

53. Every matter, small and great, is on record.

54. As to the Righteous, they will be in the midst of Gardens and Rivers,(5168)

5168 The record, in the case of those who dishonoured and violated Truth, will lead to their undoing; but in the case of those who honoured the Truth and adopted it so as to shine in their righteous lives, the result is expressed by four metaphors, in an ascending degree of sublimity: (1) they will be in the midst of Gardens where rivers flow; (2) they will be in an Assembly of Truth; (3) in the Presence of Allah; (4) Whose sovereignty is omnipotent. "*Gardens*" *with Rivers (flowing beneath):* this has been explained more than once already: *Cf.* n. 4668 to 43:70. The Garden suggests all the Bliss we can imagine through our senses. (R).

55. In an Assembly of Truth,(5169) in the Presence of(5170) a Sovereign Omnipotent.(5171)

5169 While we possess our bodily senses, the best conceptions we can form are through our sense-perceptions, and the Garden is a good symbol from that point of view. The next higher understanding of spiritual truth is through our intellect and social satisfaction. This is best symbolised by the Assembly of Truth—the gathering in which we sit with our fellows and enjoy the realisation of Truth and the dissipation of falsehoods and half-truths.

5170 But there is a higher conception still, something so intensely spiritual that it can only be expressed by reference to the Presence of Allah. (R).

5171 *Muqtadir,* which is translated Omnipotent, implies something more: the eighth-declension form denotes not only complete mastery, but the further idea that the mastery arises form Allah's own nature, and depends on nothing else whatever. (R).



55. Al Rahman (The Most Gracious)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. (Allah) Most Gracious!

2. It is He Who has(5172) taught the Qur´an.

5172 The Revelation comes from Allah Most Gracious, and it is one of the greatest Signs of His grace and favour. He is the source of all Light, and His light is diffused throughout the universe.

3. He has created man:

4. He has taught him speech(5173) (and intelligence).

5173 *Bayan:* intelligent speech: power of expression: capacity to understand clearly the relation of things and to explain them. Allah has given this to man, and besides this revelation in man's own heart, has aided him with revelation in nature and revelation through prophets and messengers.

5. The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed;(5174)

5174 In the great astronomical universe there are exact mathematical laws, which bear witness to Allah's Wisdom and also to His favours to His creatures; for we all profit by the heat and light, the seasons, and the numerous changes in the tides and the atmosphere, on which the constitution of our globe and the maintenance of life depend.

6. And the herbs(5175) and the trees - both (alike) bow in adoration.(5176)

5175 *Najm:* may mean stars collectively, or herbs collectively; perhaps both meanings are implied.

5176 All nature adores Allah. *Cf.* 22:18 , and n. 2790; 13:15 ; and 16:48-49.

7. And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice),(5177)

5177 The "balance of justice" in this verse is connected with "the Balance" in the next two verses, that men may act jusdy to each other and observe due balance in all their actions, following the golden mean and not transgressing due bounds in anything. But the Balance is also connected figuratively with the heavens above in three symbols: (1) Justice is a heavenly virtue; (2) the heavens themselves are sustained by mathematical balance; and (3) the constellation Libra (the Balance) is entered by the sun at the middle of the zodiacal year.

8. In order that ye may not transgress (due) balance.

9. So establish weight with justice(5178) and fall not short in the balance.

5178 To be taken both literally and figuratively. A man should be honest and straight in every daily matter, such as weighing out things which he is selling: and he should be straight, just and honest, in all the highest dealings, not only with other people, but with himself and in his obedience to Allah's Law. Not many do either the one or the other when they have an opportunity of deceit. Justice is the central virtue, and the avoidance of both excess and defect in conduct keeps the human world balanced just as the heavenly world is kept balanced by mathematical order.

10. It is He Who has spread out the earth(5179) for (His) creatures:

5179 How can Allah's favours be counted? Look at the earth alone. Life and the conditions here are mutually balanced for Allah's creatures. The vegetable world produces fruit of various kinds and corn or grain of various kinds for human food. The grain harvest yields with it fodder for animals in the shape of leaves and straw, as well as food for men in the shape of grain. The plants not only supply food but sweet-smelling herbs and flowers. *Rayhan* is the sweet basil, but is here used in the generic sense, for agreeable produce in the vegetable world, to match the useful produce already mentioned.

11. Therein is fruit and date-palms, producing spathes (enclosing dates);

12. Also corn, with (its) leaves and stalk for fodder, and sweet-smelling plants.

13. Then which of the favours(5180) of your Lord will ye deny?

5180 Both the pronoun "your" and the verb "will ye deny" are in the Arabic in the Dual Number. The whole Surah is a symphony of Duality, which leads up to Unity, as explained in the Introduction. All creation is in pairs: 51:49, and notes 5025-26; 36:36, n. 3981. Justice is the conciliation of two opposites to unity, the settlement of the unending feud between Right and Wrong. The things and concepts mentioned in this Surah are in pairs: man and outer nature; sun and moon; herbs and trees; heavens and earth; fruit and corn; human food and fodder for cattle; things nourishing and things sweet-smelling; and so on throughout the Surah. Then there is man and Jinn, for which see n. 5182 below. *Will ye deny?* that is, fail to acknowledge either in word or thought or in your conduct. If you misuse Allah's gifts or ignore them, that is equivalent to ingratitude or denial or refusal to profit by Allah's infinite Grace.

14. He created man from sounding clay(5181) like unto pottery,

5181 See n. 1966 to 15:26. The creation of men and J inns is contrasted. Man was made of sounding clay, dry and brittle like pottery. The Jinn (see next note) was made from a clear flame of fire. Yet each has capacities and possibilities which only Allah's Grace bestows on them. How can they deny Allah's favours?

15. And He created Jinns(5182) from fire free of smoke:

5182 For the meaning of Jinn, see n. 929 to 6:100. They are spirits, and therefore subtle like a flame of fire. Their being free from smoke implies that they are free from grossness, for smoke is the grosser accompaniment of fire. (R).

16. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?(5183)

5183 Part of the idea of this refrain will be found in 16:71, 72; 40:81: and 53:55 (where see n. 5122).

17. (He is) Lord of the two Easts(5184) and Lord of the two Wests:

5184 *The two Easts* are the two extreme points where the sun rises during the year, and includes all the points between. Similarly the two Wests include the two extreme points of the sun's setting and all the points between. The Dual Number fits in with the general atmosphere of Duality in this Surah. Allah is Lord of every region of the earth and sky, and He scatters His bounties everywhere. See also n. 4641 to 43:38, and n. 4034 to 37:5.

18. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

19. He has let free(5185) the two bodies of flowing water, meeting together:

5185 See 25:53 and nn. 3111-3112, where it is explained how the two bodies of water, salt and sweet, meet together, yet keep separate, as if there was a barrier or partition between them. This is also one of the favours of Allah. Sea water is a sanitating agent, while fresh water is sweet and palatable to drink. For the allegorical interpretation, see notes 2404-2405 to 18:60; also n. 5186 (end) below.

20. Between them is a Barrier which they do not transgress:

21. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

22. Out of them come Pearls and Coral:(5186)

5186 Pearls are produced by the oyster and coral by the polyp, a minute marine creature which, working in millions, has by its secretions produced the reefs, islands, and banks in and on both sides of the Red Sea and in other parts of the world. The pearl has a translucent lustre, usually white, but sometimes pink or black. Coral is usually opaque, red or pink, but often white, and is seen in beautiful branching or cup-like shapes as visitors to Port Sudan will recall. Both are used as gems and stand here for gems generally. Mineral gems, such as agate and cornelian, are found in river-beds. Pearl oysters are also found in some rivers. Taken allegorically, the two kinds of gems would denote the jewels of this life and the jewels of the spiritual world. The jewels of this world—like coral—are hard, widely spread over the world, comparatively cheap, and less absorptive of the light from above. The spiritual jewels—like pearls—are soft, rare, costly, and translucent, absorbent of light and showing the more lustre the more they are in light. The analogy can be carried further to the two seas—the two bodies of flowing water—mentioned in verses 19-20 above. They are the two kinds of knowledge—human and divine—referred to in the story of Moses and Khidr: see notes 2404-2405 to 18:60.

23. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

24. And His are the Ships(5187) sailing smoothly through the seas, lofty as mountains:(5188)

5187 The Ships-sailing ships and steamers, and by extension of the analogy, aeroplanes and airships majestically navigating the air-are made by man, but the intelligence and science which made them possible are given by man's Creator; and therefore the Ships also are the gifts of Allah.

5188 *Lofty as mountains:* both in respect of the high sails, or masts, and in respect of the height to which the top of the ship towers above the surface of the sea. The 'Queen Mary II'-the biggest ship afloat in 2004-has a height, from the keel to the top of the funnel of 236 feet. (Eds.)

25. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

26. All that is on earth will perish:

27. But will abide (for ever) the Face of thy Lord,-(5189) full of Majesty, Bounty and Honour.(5190)

5189 The most magnificent works of man-such as they are-are but fleeting. Ships, Empires, the Wonders of Science and Art, the splendours of human glory or intellect, will all pass away. The most magnificent objects in outer Nature-the mountains and valleys, the sun and moon, the Constellation Orion and the star Sinus-will also pass away in their appointed time. But the only One that will endure forever is the "Face" of Allah. "Face" expresses Personality, Glory, Majesty, Inner Being, Essence, Self-all the noble qualities which we associate with the Beautiful Names of Allah. See n. 114 to 2:112; also n. 1154 to 7:180, and n. 2322 to 17:110.

5190 *Ikram:* two ideas are prominent in the word. (1) the idea of generosity, as proceeding from the person whose attribute it is, and (2) the idea of honour, as given by others to the person whose attribute it is. Both these ideas are summed up in "nobility". To make the meaning quite clear, I have employed in the translation the two words "Bounty and Honour" for the single word *Ikram.* The same attributes recur in the last verse of this Surah. In the Fact of Allah's Eternity is the Hope of our Future.

28. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

29. Of Him seeks (its need)(5191) every creature in the heavens and on earth: every day in (new) Splendour(5192) doth He (shine)!

5191 Every single creature depends on Allah for its needs: of all of them the Cherisher and Sustainer is *Allah.Seek (its needs):* does not necessarily mean 'seek them in words': what is meant is the dependence: the allusion is to the Source of supply.

5192 *Sha'n:* state, splendour; aim, work, business, momentous affair. Allah's is still the directing hand in all affairs. He does not sit apart, careless of mankind or of any of His creatures. But His working shows new Splendour every day, every hour, every moment.

30. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

31. Soon shall We settle your affairs, O both ye worlds!(5193)

5193 *Thaqal:* weight, something weighty, something weighed with something else. The two *thaqals* are Jinns and men who are burdened with responsibility or, as some commentators hold, with sin. They are both before Allah, and the affairs of both are conducted under His Command. If there are inequalities or apparent disturbances of balance, that is only for a season. Allah gives to both good and evil men a chance in this period of probation; but this period will soon be over, and Judgment will be established. To give you this chance, this probation, this warning, is itself a favour, by which you should profit, and for which you should be grateful. (R).

32. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

33. O ye assembly of Jinns(5194) and men! If it be ye can pass beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, pass ye! not without authority shall ye be able to pass!

5194 *Cf.* 6:35 and 6:130, where the Jinns and men are addressed collectively. That whole passage, 6:130-134, should be read as a commentary on this verse. 'If you think that because you do things in secret, or because some of your sins do not *seem* to meet their inevitable punishment or some of your good deeds seem to go unnoticed, do not be deceived. Judgement will soon come. You cannot possibly escape out of the zones in which your lives have been cast, without authority from Allah. Be grateful to Allah for the chances He has given you'. "All that hath been promised unto you will come to pass: nor can ye frustrate it in the least bit" (6:134).

34. Then which of the favours(5195) of your Lord will ye deny?

5195 Note how gradually we have been led up in the Argument. 'The Signs of Allah are all about you, in revelation, in your intelligence, and in nature around you. Your creation; the mystic light and heat typified by the sun in all directions; the cycle of waters in the physical earth and of Knowledge in the world of Intelligence; the help and cherishing care of Allah Himself-all these things should teach you the Truth and warn you about the Future, which is more particularly referred to in the remainder of the Surah.

35. On you will be sent (O ye evil ones twain!)(5196) a flame of fire (to burn) and a smoke (to choke):(5197) no defence will ye have:

5196 The Dual is with reference to the two worlds explained above in n. 5193.

5197 We now come to the terrors of the Judgement on the evil ones.

36. Then which of the favours(5198) of your Lord will ye deny?

5198 Here and in some of the verses that follow, (verses 40, 42, and 45 below), the refrain applies with an ironical meaning. It is as if it was said: 'You used to laugh at Revelation, and at the warnings which were given for your own benefit in order to draw you to repentance and Allah's Mercy; what do you find now? Is not all that was said to you true?' To reject Allah's Law is in itself to deny Allah's Mercies.

37. When the sky is rent asunder, and it becomes red like ointment:(5199)

5199 Melting away like grease or ointment. The red colour will be due to the flames and the heat. The whole of the world as we know it now will dissolve.

38. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

39. On that Day no question will be asked(5200) of man or Jinn as to his sin.

5200 This does not of course mean that they will not be called to account for their sin. They will certainly be called to account for all their deeds: 15:92-93. The meaning of this whole passage is that their personal responsibility will be enforced. But their own tongues and hands and feet will bear witness against them as to their actions: 24:24. Every man will bear marks on his person, showing his classification in the Final Account: 7:48 . After these Marks are affixed, everyone's position and status in the Final Account will be known to everyone. As to the Judge on the Throne of Judgement, He will of course know all before Judgement is set up. But to give every chance to the accused, his record will be produced and shown to him (69:19,25; 18:49), and he will be given a chance to plead (7:53), but if a sinner, he will be in confusion (28:66).

40. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

41. (For) the sinners will be known by their Marks:(5201) and they will be seized by their forelocks and their feet.

5201 *By their Marks:* see last note.

42. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

43. This is the Hell which the Sinners deny:(5202)

5202 It will then become too real to them. 'Oh! that this too, too solid flesh would melt", as Hamlet said to his Queen-Mother *(Hamlet,* i. 2. 129).

44. In its midst and in the midst of boiling hot water will they wander round!(5203)

5203 They will apparently have no rest. The fire will burn but not consume them, and their drink will be only boiling water.

45. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

46. But for such as fear the time when they will stand before (the Judgment Seat(5204) of) their Lord, there will be two Gardens-(5205)

5204 The reference to the Punishment of Sin having been dismissed in a few short lines, we now come to a description of the state of the Blessed. (R).

5205 Here two Gardens are mentioned, and indeed four, counting the other two mentioned in 55:62-76. Opinions are divided about this, but the best opinion is that the two mentioned in verses 46-61 are for the degree of those Nearest to Allah *(Muqarrabun),* and those in verses 62-76 for the Companions of the Right Hand: Why two for *each ?* The Duality is to express variety, and the whole scheme of the Surah runs in twos. There will be no dullness of uniformity: as our minds can conceive it now, there will be freshness in change, but it will be from Bliss to Bliss, and there will be Unity. (R).

47. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?-

48. Containing all kinds (of trees and delights);-

49. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?-

50. In them (each) will be two Springs flowing (free);(5206)

5206 *Two* Springs, for the same reasons as there will be two Gardens. See last note.

51. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?-

52. In them will be Fruits of every kind, two and two.(5207)

5207 The Duality of Fruits is for the same reason as the Duality of the Gardens. See n. 5205.

53. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

54. They will recline on Carpets, whose inner linings will be of rich brocade: the Fruit of the Gardens will be near (and easy of reach).(5208)

5208 The toil and fatigue of this life will be over: *Cf.* 35:35 and n. 5654 to 69:23.

55. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

56. In them will be (Maidens),(5209) chaste, restraining their glances,(5210) whom no man or Jinn before them has touched;-

5209 See notes 4728-4729 to 44:54. (R).

5210 *Cf.* 37:48 and n. 4064. Their purity is the feature chiefly symbolised.

57. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?-

58. Like unto Rubies and coral.(5211)

5211 Delicate pink, with reference to their complexions and their beauty of form. The gems also indicate their worth and dignity *(Cf.* nn. 4064-4065).

59. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

60. Is there any Reward for Good - other than Good?(5212)

5212 This is the summing up of all the symbolism used to express the Fruit of Goodness or Good. The symbolism must necessarily resort to comparative terms, to subjective ideas of Bliss. But the fullest expression can only be given in abstract terms: "Is there any reward for Good—other than Good?" Can anything express it better?

61. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

62. And besides these two, there are two other Gardens,-(5213)

5213 See n. 5205 above.

63. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?-

64. Dark-green in colour(5214) (from plentiful watering).

5214 *Dark green in* colour"; these Gardens will also be fruitful and flourishing, and watered plentifully; but their aspect and characteristics will be different, corresponding to the subjective differences in the ideas of Bliss among those who would respectively enjoy the two sets of Gardens.

65. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

66. In them (each) will be two Springs pouring forth water(5215) in continuous abundance:

5215 In comparison with the Springs in the other two Gardens, described in 55:50 above, these Springs would seem to irrigate crops of vegetables and fruits requiring a constant supply of abundant water.

67. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

68. In them will be Fruits, and dates and pomegranates:(5216)

5216 See last note. *Cf.* also with 55:52 above, where "fruits of every kind" are mentioned.

69. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

70. In them will be fair (Companions), good, beautiful;-(5217)

5217 see n. 5209 above. Goodness and Beauty are specially feminine attributes.

71. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?-

72. Companions restrained (as to(5218) their glances), in (goodly) pavilions;-(5219)

5218 *Maqsurat* here is the passive participle of the same verb as the active participle *Qasirat* in 55:56, 37:48 and 38:52- As I have translated *Qasirat* by the phrase "restraining (their glances)", I think I am right in translating the passive *Maqsurat* by "restrained (as to their glances)". This is the only place in the Qur'an where the passive form occurs.

5219 The Pavilions seem to add dignity to their status. In the other Gardens (55:58), the description "like rubies and corals" is perhaps an indication of higher dignity.

73. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?-

74. Whom no man or Jinn before them has touched;-

75. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?-

76. Reclining on green Cushions(5220) and rich Carpets of beauty.

5220 *Cf.* the parallel words for the other two Gardens, in 55:54 above, which suggest perhaps a higher dignity. *Rafraf* is usually translated by Cushions or Pillows, and I have followed this meaning in view of the word "reclining". But another interpretation is "Meadows", in view of the adjective "green"— *'abqari:* carpets richly figured and dyed, and skillfully worked.

77. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

78. Blessed be the name of thy Lord, full of Majesty, Bounty and Honour.(5221)

5221 *Cf.* 55:27 and n. 5190. This minor echo completes the symmetry of the two leading Ideas of this Surah—the Bounty and Majesty of Allah, and the Duty of man to make himself worthy of nearness to Allah.



56. Al Waqi'ah (The Inevitable)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. When the Event Inevitable(5222) cometh to pass,

5222 The Event Inevitable is the Hour of Judgement. People may doubt now whether it will come. But when it comes, as it will come, suddenly upon them, it will come with such tremendous reality that it will be burnt deep into the experience of every soul. No one can then be deceived or entertain false notions about it.

2. Then will no (soul) entertain falsehood concerning its coming.

3. (Many) will it bring low;(5223) (many) will it exalt;

5223 There will be a sorting out of Good and Evil. Or rather, (verse 7 below), there will be three main classes. Among the Good there will be the specially exalted class, those nearest to Allah (*al muqarrabun,* 56:11- 26), and the righteous people generally, called the Companions of the Right Hand *(Ashab al maymanah,* 56:27-40). And there will be those in agony, the Companions of the Left Hand *(Ashab al mash'amah.* 56:41-56). Many who were high and mighty in this life will be brought low for their sins, and many who were lowly but virtuous will be exalted to various ranks and degrees. The old landmarks will be lost in the inner world, as they will be in the outer world.

4. When the earth shall be shaken to its depths,

5. And the mountains shall be crumbled to atoms,(5224)

5224 The old physical world will disappear in the New Creation.

6. Becoming dust scattered abroad,

7. And ye shall be sorted out into three classes.(5225)

5225 See n. 5223 above.

8. Then (there will be) the Companions of the Right Hand;- What will be the Companions of the Right Hand?

9. And the Companions of the Left Hand,- what will be the Companions of the Left Hand?

10. And those Foremost (in Faith) will be Foremost (in the Hereafter).(5226)

5226 *Foremost (in Faith):* There are two meanings, and both are implied. (1) Those who have reached the highest degree in spiritual understanding, such as the great prophets and teachers of mankind, will also take precedence in the Hereafter. (2) Those who are the first in time—the quickest and readiest—to accept Allah's Message—will have the first place in the Kingdom of Heaven . Verses 8, 9 and 10 mention the three main categories or classifications after Judgement. In the subsequent verses their happiness or misery are symbolised. This category, Foremost in Faith, is nearest to Allah.

11. These will be those Nearest to Allah:(5227)

5227 See n. 5223 above. Nearness to Allah is the test of the highest Bliss, (see also n. 3779). (R).

12. In Gardens of Bliss:

13. A number of people from those of old,(5228)

5228 Of great Prophets and Teachers there were many before the time of the Prophet Muhammad. As he was the last of the Prophets, he and the great Teachers under his Dispensation will be comparatively fewer in number, but their teaching is the sum and flower of all mankind's spiritual experience.

14. And a few from those of later times.

15. (They will be) on Thrones(5229) encrusted (with gold and precious stones),

5229 *Cf.* 15:47 ; 37:44, 52:20, and 88:13. [Eds.].

16. Reclining on them, facing each other.(5230)

5230 But they will not be separate each in his own corner. They will face each other. For they are all one, and their mutual society will be part of their Bliss.

17. Round about them will (serve)(5231) youths of perpetual (freshness),

5231 *Cf.* 52:24. and n. 5058. The youth and freshness with which the attendants will serve is a symbol of true service such as we may expect in the spiritual world. That freshness will be perpetual and not subject to any moods, or chances, or changes.

18. With goblets, (shining) beakers, and cups (filled) out of clear-flowing fountains:

19. No after-ache will they receive therefrom, nor will they suffer intoxication:(5232)

5232 The Feast of Reason and the Flow of Soul are typified by all that is best in the feasts in this imperfect world, but there will be none of the disadvantages incident to such feasts in this world, such as satiety, aches, excess, a sense of exhaustion, or loss of senses, etc. *Cf.* 37:47, and n. 4063. A goblet is a bowl without handles; a beaker has a "lip" and a stem; "cup" is a general term.

20. And with fruits, any that they may select:

21. And the flesh of fowls, any that they may desire.

22. And (there will be) Companions with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes,-(5233)

5233 *Cf.* 44:54, and n. 4729. The companionship of Beauty and Grace is one of the highest pleasures of life. In this bodily life it takes bodily form. In the higher life it takes a higher form. (R).

23. Like unto Pearls(5234) well-guarded.

5234 *Cf.* 52:24, where this description is applied to the youths who serve. See also n. 5058 there. In 56:78 below the adjective *maknun* is applied to the Qur'an, "the well-guarded Book".

24. A Reward for the deeds of their past (life).

25. Not frivolity will they(5235) hear therein, nor any taint of ill,-

5235 *Cf.* 52:23. Apart from the physical ills, worldly feasts or delights are apt to suffer from vain or frivolous discourse, idle boasting, foolish flattery, or phrases pointed with secret venom or moral mischief. The negation of these from spiritual Bliss follows as a matter of course, but it is specially insisted on to guard against the perversities of human nature, which likes to read ill into the best that can be put in words.

26. Only the saying,(5236) "Peace! Peace".

5236 *Qil* is best translated "saying", rather than "word". For the saying is an act, a thought, a fact, which may be embodied in a word, but which goes far beyond the word. The "Peace of Allah" is an atmosphere which sums up Heaven even better than "Bliss".

27. The Companions of the Right Hand,- what will be the Companions of the Right Hand?

28. (They will be) among(5237) Lote-trees without thorns,

5237 *Lote trees:* see 34:16 n. 3814. (R).

29. Among Talh trees(5238) with flowers (or fruits) piled one above another,-

5238 *Talk:* some understand by this the plantain or banana tree, of which the fruit is borne in bunches, one tier above another; but the banana tree does not grow in Arabia and its ordinary Arabic name is Mawz; perhaps it is better to understand a special kind of Acacia tree, which flowers profusely, the flowers appearing in tiers one above another.

30. In shade long-extended,

31. By water flowing constantly,

32. And fruit in abundance.

33. Whose season is not limited, nor (supply) forbidden,(5239)

5239 As it is not like earthly fruit, its season is not limited, nor is there any prohibition by law or custom or circumstance as to when or how it is to be consumed. (R).

34. And on Thrones (of Dignity), raised high.

35. We have created (their Companions)(5240) of special creation.

5240 The pronoun in Arabic is in the feminine gender, but lest grosser ideas of sex should intrude, it is made clear that these Companions for heavenly society will be of special creation-of virginal purity, grace, and beauty inspiring and inspired by love, with the question of time and age eliminated. Thus every person among the Righteous will have the Bliss of Heaven and the Peace of Allah.

36. And made them virgin - pure (and undefiled), -

37. Beloved (by nature), equal in age,-

38. For the Companions of the Right Hand.

39. A (goodly) number from those of old,(5241)

5241 This class-the righteous-will be a large company in Heaven, belonging to all the ages of the world. *Cf.* n. 5228 to 56:13 above. Such is the unbounded Bounty of Allah,

40. And a (goodly) number from those of later times.

41. The Companions of the Left Hand,- what will be the Companions of the Left Hand?

42. (They will be) in the midst of a Fierce Blast of Fire(5242) and in Boiling Water,

5242 Notice the parallelism in the contrast between those in Bliss and those in Misery. The allegory in each case pursues the idea of contrast, and the allegories about Misery lose nothing by their terse brevity. The fierce Blast of Fire and the Boiling Water are in contrast to the happy Lote tree and the flowers and fruits in verses 28-29 above.

43. And in the shades of Black Smoke:(5243)

5243 Even the Shades get a different quality in the Abode of Misery: shades of black smoke in contrast to the cool and refreshing long extended shades of trees by brooks in verses 30-31 above.

44. Nothing (will there be) to refresh, nor to please:

45. For that they were wont to be indulged, before that, in wealth (and luxury),(5244)

5244 *Cf.* 34:34, and 43:23. We must read verses 45-46 together. They had wealth and the good things of life, but they used them in self-indulgence and shameless crime, and now they are in humiliation.

46. And persisted obstinately in wickedness supreme!(5244-A)

5244-A Wickedness supreme: *i.e.,* their associating others with Allah in His divinity. [Eds.].

47. And they used to say, "What! when we die and become dust and bones,(5245) shall we then indeed be raised up again?-

5245 Their want of belief and ridicule of Allah's Message contrasts with the stern reality which they see around them now.

48. "(We) and our fathers of old?"

49. Say: "Yea, those of old and those of later times,

50. "All will certainly be gathered together for the meeting appointed for a Day well-known.(5246)

5246 In 26:38 (see n. 3159) the phrase *a day well-known* is used for a solemn day of festival, when the multitude of people gather together. The Day of Judgement is such a day in the supreme sense of the word.

51. "Then will ye truly,- O ye that go wrong, and treat (Truth) as Falsehood!-

52. "Ye will surely taste of the Tree of Zaqqum.(5247)

5247 This is the Cursed Tree mentioned in 17:60, where see n. 2250. *Cf.* also 37:62. n. 4072; and 44:43-46 and n. 4722.

53. "Then will ye fill your insides therewith,

54. "And drink Boiling Water on top of it:

55. "Indeed ye shall drink like diseased camels raging with thirst!"(5248)

5248 A terrible picture of Misery in contrast to the Companionship of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, on Thrones of Dignity, for the Companions of the Right Hand, in verses 34-38 above.

56. Such will be their entertainment on the Day of Requital!

57. It is We Who have created you: why do ye(5249) not testify to this truth?

5249 Man is apt to forget his Creator, and even the fact that he, man, is a created being. The seed of his body, out of which his physical life starts, is not created by man, but by Allah in the process of the unfoldment of the world. Why will not man recognise and bear witness of this fact by a life of obedience to Allah's Law?

58. Do ye then see?- The (human Seed) that ye throw out,-

59. Is it ye who create it, or are We the Creators?

60. We have decreed Death to be your common lot,(5250) and We are not to be frustrated

5250 Just as Allah has created this life that we see, so He has decreed that Death should be the common lot of all of us. Surely, if He can thus give life and death, as we see it, why should we refuse to believe that He can give us other forms when this life is over? The Future Life, though indicated by what we know now, is to be on a wholly different plane. (R).

61. from changing your Forms and creating you (again) in (forms) that ye know not.

62. And ye certainly know already the first form of creation: why then do ye not celebrate His praises?

63. See ye the seed that(5251) ye sow in the ground?

5251 Having appealed to our own nature within us, He appeals now to the external nature around us, which should be evidence to us (1) of His loving care for us, and (2) of its being due to causes other than those which we produce and control. Three examples are given: (1) the seed which we sow in the soil; it is Allah's processes in nature, which make it grow; (2) the water which we drink; it is Allah's processes in nature, that send it down from the clouds as rain, and distribute it through springs and rivers; (3) the fire which we strike; it is again a proof of Allah's Plan and Wisdom in nature.

64. Is it ye that cause it to grow, or are We the Cause?

65. Were it Our Will, We could crumble it to dry powder, and ye would be left in wonderment,

66. (Saying), "We are indeed left with debts (for nothing):(5252)

5252 The Cultivator contracts debts for seed and gives labour for ploughing, swing, watering, and weeding, in the hope of reaping a harvest. Should he not give thanks to Allah when his harvest is in?

67. "Indeed are we shut out (of the fruits of our labour)"

68. See ye the water which ye drink?

69. Do ye bring it down (in rain) from the cloud or do We?

70. Were it Our Will, We could make it salt (and unpalatable):(5253) then why do ye not give thanks?

5253 The mystery of the two streams of water, one sweet and the other salt, constantly mingling, and yet always separate, is referred to more than once. The never-ending circuit is established by streams and rivers mingling with the ocean, the ocean sending forth mists and steam through a process of evaporation which forms clouds, and the clouds by condensation pouring forth rain to feed the streams and rivers again: see notes 3111-3112 to 25:53, and n. 5185 to 55:19, and the further references given there.

71. See ye the Fire which ye kindle?

72. Is it ye who grow the tree which feeds(5254) the fire, or do We grow it?

5254 The relation of Fire to Trees is intimate. In nearly all the fire that we burn, the fuel is derived from the wood of trees. Even mineral coal is nothing but the wood of prehistoric forests petrified under the earth through geological ages. Fire produced out of green trees is referred to in 36:80; and n. 4026 there gives instances.

73. We have made it a memorial (of Our handiwork),(5255) and an article of comfort and convenience for the denizens of deserts.(5256)

5255 Fire is a fit memorial of Allah's handiwork in nature. It is also an emblem of man's earliest civilisation. It can stand as a symbol of physical comfort and convenience to man, of the source of spiritual light, and also of the warning to Evil about its destruction. In the same way the sower's seed has a symbolical meaning in the preaching of the Message: see 48:29, and n. 4917: and the Rain and the Streams of water have a symbolical meaning: see notes 2404-5 to 18:60.

5256 *Cf.* 20:10 , and n. 2541, where the mystic meaning of the Fire which Moses saw in the desert is explained. Even ordinarily, a fire in a desert is a sign of human habitation; by following it you may get human society and human comfort. A fire, or light, or beacon in many places directs a traveller on the way. Lighthouses at sea and beacons in modern aerodromes serve the same purpose for mariners and airmen. Another parable about fire will be found in 2:17-18, and n. 38.

74. Then celebrate with praises(5257) the name of thy Lord, the Supreme!

5257 Seeing all these Signs in nature and their symbolical meaning in the spiritual world, man must turn to Allah and do His Will.

75. Furthermore I call to witness the setting(5258) of the Stars,-

5258 *The setting of the Stars:* a number of mystic meanings are attached. Here are three. *(1) Cf.* 43:1 and n. 5085; the setting of a glorious star is a symbol of humility before the power, beauty, and goodness of Allah. (2) It may refer to the extinction of the stars at the Day of Judgement, betokening the establishment of Allah's Justice and the Truth of His Revelation. (3) What is bright or beautiful to our senses may disappear from our ken within a few hours, even though its own existence may continue. All light is relative except the Light of Allah.

76. And that is indeed a mighty adjuration(5259) if ye but knew,-

5259 The glory of the firmament as it exists, and the wonder of its passing away, are both evidence, to the discerning mind, of the Future which Allah has prepared, but this evidence can only be effective if men "but knew", *i.e.,* turned their earnest attention to it.

77. That this is indeed a qur´an most honourable,(5260)

5260 Your attention is drawn to the momentous issues of the Future by the Qur'an. It is a Revelation described by four characteristics. (1) It is most honourable, *karim,* which implies, besides the fact that it is worthy of receiving honour, that it confers great favours on those who receive it. (2) It is well-guarded, *maknun;* precious in itself, and well-preserved in its purity; see n. 5234 to 56:23; see also 15:9, and n. 1944. (3) None but the clean shall touch it—clean in body, mind, thought, intention, and soul; only such can achieve real contact with its full meaning. (4) It is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds, and therefore universal for all.

78. In Book well-guarded,

79. Which none shall touch but those who are clean:

80. A Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.

81. Is it such a Message that ye would hold(5261) in light esteem?

5261 The Message being such as is described in the last note, how can anyone ignore it or treat it with contempt or refuse to allow it to improve his life?

82. And have ye made it(5262) your livelihood that ye should declare it false?

5262 The worst indictment of an enemy of Revelation would be that he should make Falsehood a source of filthy lucre for himself, or that he should let his precious life be corrupted by such unholy occupation.

83. Then why do ye not(5263) (intervene) when (the soul of the dying man) reaches the throat,-

5263 There is a hiatus after *why do ye not?—and* two parenthetical clauses-after which the clause *why do ye not? is* resumed again in verse 86 below, with its complement in verse 87. It is permissible to the translator to add some such word as *intervene* here, to make the translation run smoothly.

84. And ye the while (sit) looking on,-(5264)

5264 The dying man's friends, relatives and companions may be sitting round him and quite close to him in his last moments, but Allah is nearer still at all times for He is nearer than the man's own jugular vein (50:16), and one of Allah's own titles is "Ever Near" (34:50).

85. But We are nearer to him than ye, and yet see not,-

86. Then why do ye not,-(5265) If you are exempt from (future) account,-

5265 These words resume the sentence begun at verse 83 above and interrupted by the two parenthetical clauses in verses 84 and 85. See n. 5263 above.

87. Call back the soul,(5266) if ye are true (in the claim of independence)?

5266 The sentence may now be briefly paraphrased. 'If you disbelieve in Revelation and a future Judgement, and claim to do what you like and be independent of Allah, how is it you cannot call back a dying man's soul to his body when all of you congregate round him at his death-bed? But you are not independent of Judgement. There *is* a Day of Accounts, when you will have to be judged by your deeds in this life.'

88. Thus, then, if he be of those Nearest to Allah,(5267)

5267 See above, 56:11-26 and notes.

89. (There is for him) Rest and Satisfaction,(5268) and a Garden of Delights.

5268 *Rayhan:* sweet-smelling plants, as in 55:12. Here used as symbolical of complete Satisfaction and Delight.

90. And if he be of the Companions of the Right Hand,(5269)

5269 See above, 56:27-38 and notes.

91. (For him is the salutation), "Peace be unto thee",(5270) from the Companions of the Right Hand.

5270 In 56:26 above the salutation of "Peace, Peace!" is addressed to those Nearest to Allah. Here we learn that it is also addressed to the Companions of the Right Hand. Both are in Gardens of Bliss: only the former have a higher Dignity than the latter.

92. And if he be of those who treat (Truth) as Falsehood,(5271) who go wrong,

5271 *Cf.* above 56:51 -55.

93. For him is Entertainment with Boiling Water.

94. And burning in Hell-Fire.

95. Verily, this is the Very Truth and Certainly.(5272)

5272 "The assurance of the Hereafter" is one of the strongest features of Faith. For without it the apparent inequalities and injustices of this Life cannot be satisfactorily explained.

96. So celebrate with praises(5273) the name of thy Lord, the Supreme.

5273 *Cf.* 56:74 above. That was the conclusion of the argument about the Future from the examples of Allah's goodness in nature. Now we have the conclusion of the same argument from Allah's revelation through His inspired Messengers.

57. Al Hadid (Iron)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth,- let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah:(5275) for He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

5275 A connecting thought between this and the last Surah, of which see verse 96. See also paragraph 3 of the Introduction to S. 53.

2. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: It is He Who gives Life and Death; and He has Power over all things.

3. He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Hidden:(5276) and He has full knowledge of all things.

5276 Allah is Evident insofar as there is ample evidence of His existence and providence all around us. On the other hand, Allah is Hidden insofar as intellect cannot grasp His essence nor can He be seen in the present world. The following tradition in Sahih Muslim is also significant for an understanding of this verse. The Prophet (peace be on him) said: "Thou art the First, so that there was nothing before Thee; and Thou art the Last, so that there is nothing after Thee; and Thou art Evident, (or Ascendant) so that there is nothing above Thee, and Thou art the Hidden, the Knower of hidden things, so that there is nothing hidden from Thee." [Eds.].

4. He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days,(5277) and is moreover firmly established on the Throne (of Authority),(5278) He knows what enters within the earth and what comes forth out of it, what comes down from heaven and what mounts up to it. And He is with you wheresoever ye(5279) may be. And Allah sees well all that ye do.

5277 *In six Days:* see 41:9-12, and notes; also more briefly, n. 1031 to 7:54 .

5278 *Cf.* 10:3, and n. 1386. It is not that Allah completed His Creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, or rests now. Certain external forms of the universe were by Allah's Command completed in six periods of evolution. But His creative process still goes on, and He is still, and will always be, in full control, knowing all and guiding all affairs. (R).

5279 Allah watches over man and observes his deeds. His knowledge comprehends all, the earth, heavens, what is in them or above them or whatever is in between them, comes out of them or goes into them, for "not a leaf doth fall but with His knowledge", and "there is not a grain in the darkness for depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh of dry (green or withered), but is inscribed in a Record". (6:59). [Eds.].

5. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth:(5280) and all affairs are referred back to Allah.

5280 See 57:2 above, where this phrase referred to Allah's complete authority over the whole of the external universe: the same phrase now refers to His complete authority over the abstract world—of thoughts and affairs. Every affair must finally go back to Him, whether it comes out here from Darkness into Light, or hides itself from Light into Darkness. Allah's knowledge penetrates into the inmost recesses of all Hearts.

6. He merges Night into Day, and He merges Day into Night; and He has full knowledge of the secrets of (all) hearts.

7. Believe in Allah and His messenger, and spend (in charity) out of the (substance) whereof He has made you(5281) heirs. For, those of you who believe and spend (in charity),- for them is a great Reward.

5281 Whenever power or wealth or influence or any good thing is transferred from one person or group of persons to another, it involves added responsibilities to the persons receiving these advantages. They must be the more zealous in real charity and all good works, for that is a part of the evidence which they give of their faith and gratitude. And, besides, their good deeds, under the general law in the spiritual world, carry their own reward.

8. What cause have ye(5282) why ye should not believe in Allah.- and the Messenger invites you to believe in your Lord, and has indeed taken your Covenant,(5283) if ye are men of Faith.

5282 *What cause have ye why should not. . .* ? A figure of speech implying a far wider meaning than the words express. It is equivalent to saying: "There is every reason why ye *should* believe in Allah", etc. The same construction applies to verse 10 below.

5283 There are two shades of meaning. (1) There is the implied Covenant in a man who accepts the Gospel of Unity that he will bring forth all the fruits of that Gospel, *i.e.,* believe in Allah, and serve Allah and humanity. See n. 682 to 5:1. (2) There were at various times express Covenants entered into by the Muslims to serve Allah and be true to the Prophet, comparable to the Covenants of the Jewish nation about the Message of Moses; *e.g.,* the two Covenants of 'Aqabah (5:8, and n. 705) and the Pledge of Hudaybiyah (48:10, n. 4877). For the Covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai , see 2:63, n. 78.

9. He is the One Who sends to His Servant(5284) Manifest Signs, that He may lead you from the depths of Darkness into the Light and verily Allah is to you most kind and Merciful.

5284 The Prophet Muhammad. The Signs sent to him were: (1) The Ayahs of the Qur'an, and (2) his life and work, in which Allah's Plan and Purpose were unfolded.

10. And what cause have ye why ye should not spend in the cause of Allah.- For to Allah belongs(5285) the heritage of the heavens and the earth. Not equal among you are those who spent (freely) and fought, before the Victory,(5286) (with those who did so later). Those are higher in rank than those who spent (freely) and fought afterwards. But to all has Allah promised a goodly (reward). And Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.

5285 *To Allah belongs the heritage of. . . :* see n. 485 to 3:180; also n. 988 to 6:165; and n. 1964 to 15:23 .

5286 This is usually understood to refer to the Conquest of Makkah, after which the Muslims succeeded to the power and position which the Pagan Quraysh had so misused at Makkah. Thereafter the Muslims had the hegemony of Arabia , and in a few centuries, for a time, the hegemony of the world. But the words are perfectly general, and we must understand the general meaning also: that the people who fight and struggle in Allah's Cause and give of their best to it at any time are worthy of praise: but those are worthy of special distinction who do it when the Cause is being persecuted and in most need of assistance, before victory comes.

11. Who is he that will Loan to Allah a beautiful(5287) loan? for ((Allah)) will increase it manifold to his credit, and he will have (besides) a liberal Reward.

5287 *Cf.* 2:245, n. 276.

12. One Day shalt thou see the believing men and the believing women- how their Light runs(5288) forward before them and by their right hands: (their greeting will be): "Good News for you this Day! Gardens beneath which flow rivers! to dwell therein for aye! This is indeed the highest Achievement!"(5289)

5288 In the Darkness of the Day of Judgement there will be a Light to guide the righteous to their Destination. This will be the Light of their Faith and their Good Works. Perhaps the Light of the Right Hand mentioned here is the Light of their Good Works: for the Blessed will receive their Record in their right hand (69:19-24).

5289 The highest Achievement, the highest felicity, the attainment of Salvation, the fulfillment of all desires. See n. 4733 to 44:57.

13. One Day will the Hypocrites- men and women - say to the Believers: "Wait for us! Let us borrow (a Light) from your Light!"(5290) It will be said: "Turn ye back to your rear! then seek a Light (where ye can)!" So a wall(5291) will be put up betwixt them, with a gate therein. Within it will be Mercy throughout, and without it, all alongside, will be (Wrath and) Punishment!

5290 Watchful preparation in Life, and the light of Faith, which reflects the divine Light, are matters of personal Life, and cannot be borrowed from another. So, in Christ's parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), when the foolish ones had let their lamps go out for want of oil, they asked to borrow oil from the wise ones, but the wise ones answered and said, "Not so; ... but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves".

5291 The wall of Personality, or Record of Deeds, will divide the Good from the Evil. But the Gateway in it will show that communication will not be cut off. Evil must realise that *Good-i.e.,* Mercy and Felicity-had been within its reach, and that the Wrath which envelops it is due to its own rejection of Mercy.

14. (Those without) will call out, "Were we not with you?"(5292) (The others) will reply, "True! but ye led yourselves into temptation; ye looked forward (to our ruin); ye doubted ((Allah)´s Promise); and (your false) desires deceived you; until there issued the Command of Allah. And the Deceiver deceived you in respect of Allah.(5293)

5292 The evil will now claim same right of kinship or association or proximity with the good in earthly life; but in fact they had been arrogant and had selfishly despised them before. The reply will be: (1) you yourselves chose temptation and evil; (2) when you had power in your earthly life, you hoped for ruin to the good, and perhaps plotted for it; (3) you were warned by prophets of Allah, but you doubted Allah's very existence and certainly His Mercy and Justice, and the Hereafter; (4) you followed your own lusts and neglected Reason and Truth; (5) you were given plenty of rope, but you followed your mad career, until Judgement came upon you, and now it is too late for repentance.

5293 The Arch-Deceiver (Satan) deceived you in respect of Allah in many ways: for example, he made you oblivious of Allah's Mercy and loving-kindness; he made you reject His Grace; he made you think that Allah's Justice may not overtake you; etc.

15. "This Day shall no ransom be accepted of you, nor of those who rejected Allah.(5294) Your abode is the Fire: that is the proper place to claim you: and an evil refuge it is!"

5294 In personal responsibility there is no room for vicarious ransom or for ransom by payments of gold or silver or by sacrifice of possessions. Nor can the crime be expiated for *after* Judgement 'You' and 'those who rejected Allah' are two ways of looking at the same persons. 'You are rejected because you rejected Allah.'

16. Has not the time arrived(5295) for the Believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah and of the Truth which has been revealed (to them), and that they should not become like those to whom was given Revelation aforetime,(5296) but long ages passed over them and their hearts grew hard? For many among them are rebellious transgressors.

5295 Humility and the remembrance of Allah and His Message are never more necessary than in the hour of victory and prosperity.

5296 The men immediately referred to are the contemporary Jews and Christians. To each of these Ummahs was given Allah's Revelation, but as time passed, they corrupted it, became arrogant and hard-hearted, and subverted justice, truth, and the purity of Life. But the general lesson is far wider. No one is favoured by Allah except on the score of righteousness. Except on that score, there is no chosen individual or race. There is no blind good fortune or ill fortune. All happens according to the just laws and Will of Allah. But at no time is humility or righteousness more necessary than in the hour of victory or triumph.

17. Know ye (all) that Allah giveth life to the earth after its death!(5297) already have We shown the Signs plainly to you, that ye may learn wisdom.

5297 As the dead earth is revived after the refreshing showers of rain, so is it with the spirit of man, whether as an individual or a race or Ummah. There is no cause for despair. Allah's Truth will revive the Spiritual faculties if it is accepted with humility and zeal.

18. For those who give in Charity, men and women, and loan to Allah(5298) a Beautiful Loan, it shall be increased manifold (to their credit), and they shall have (besides) a liberal reward.

5298 *Cf.* 57:11; also see 2:245, n. 276.

19. And those who believe in Allah and His messengers- they are the Sincere(5299) (lovers of Truth), and the witnesses (who testify),(5300) in the eyes of their Lord: They shall have their Reward and their Light.(5301) But those who reject Allah and deny Our Signs,- they are the Companions of Hell-Fire.

5299 *Cf.* 4:69, and n. 586. The four categories there mentioned as constituting the beautiful Fellowship of Faith are: the Prophets who teach, the Sincere Lovers of Truth, the Witnesses who testify, and the Righteous who do good. Of these, the prophets or messengers have already been mentioned in this verse. The Righteous who do good are mentioned as the men and women given over to deeds of charity in verse 18.

5300 The Witnesses are not only Martyrs, but all those who carry the Banner of Truth against all odds and in all positions of danger, whether by pen or speech, or deed or counsel.

5301 Note that these two are specially high degrees in the spiritual kingdom, just short of Prophethood. For they have not only their reward in the spiritual Kingdom of Allah , like those who practise charity (verse 18 above), but they themselves become sources of light and leading.

20. Know ye (all), that the life of this world is but play and amusement,(5302) pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. Here is a similitude:(5303) How rain and the growth which it brings forth, delight (the hearts of) the tillers;(5304) soon it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry and crumbles away. But in the Hereafter is a Penalty severe (for the devotees of wrong). And Forgiveness from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure (for the devotees of Allah.. And what is the life of this world, but goods and chattels of deception?(5305)

5302 *Cf.* 6:32 , and n. 855. In the present passage the idea is further amplified. In this life people not only play and amuse themselves and each other, but they show off, and boast, and pile up riches and manpower and influence, in rivalry with each other.

5303 *Cf.* 39:21, and n. 4273. Here the Parable is meant to teach a slightly different lesson. Allah's mercies are free and open to all, like His rain. But how do men make use of them? The good men take the real spiritual harvest and store the spiritual grain. The men who are in love with the ephemeral are delighted with the green of the tares and the grass; but such things give no real nourishment; they soon wither, become dry, and crumble to pieces, like the worldly pleasures and pomps, boastings and tumults, possessions and friends.

5304 *Kuffar* is here used in the unusual sense of 'tillers or husbandmen', because they sow the seed and cover it up with soil. But the ordinary meaning, 'Rejectors of Truth' is not absent. The allegory refers to such men.

5305 *Cf.* 3:185, and n. 492. Many of the attractive vanities of this world are but nets set by the Evil One to deceive men. The only thing real and lasting is the Good Life lived in the Light of Allah.

21. Be ye foremost (in seeking) Forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden (of Bliss), the width whereof is as the width of heaven and earth,(5306) prepared for those who believe in Allah and His messengers: that is the Grace of Allah, which He bestows on whom(5307) he pleases: and Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding.

5306 *Cf.* 3:133, and n. 452.

5307 *Bestows on whom He Pleases:* that is, such grace and favour is beyond anyone's own merits. It is bestowed by Allah according to His Holy Will and Plan, which is just, merciful, and righteous.

22. No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls(5308) but is recorded in a decree before We bring(5309) it into existence: That is truly easy for Allah.

5308 External disasters or misfortunes may strike people's eye or imagination, but there are worse crises and misfortunes in the spiritual world, which are of equal or greater importance to man's future. All this happens according to the Will and Plan of Allah. Even where we are allowed the exercise of our own wills, the consequences that follow are in accordance with the laws and Plan decreed by Allah beforehand.

5309 For *bara'a,* 'to bring into existence', and other words denoting Allah's creative energy, see n. 120 to 2:117; n. 916 to 6:94; and n. 923 to 6:98.

23. In order that ye may not despair over matters that pass you by, nor exult over favours bestowed upon you. For Allah loveth not any vainglorious boaster,-(5310)

5310 In the external world, what people may consider misfortune or good fortune may both turn out to be illusory-in Kipling's words, "both imposters just the same". The righteous man does not grumble if some one else has possessions, nor exult if he has them. He does not covet and he does not boast. If he has any advantages, he shares them with other people, as he considers them not due to his own merits, but as gifts from Allah. (R).

24. Such persons as are(5311) covetous and commend covetousness to men. And if any turn back(5312) (from Allah.s Way), verily Allah is Free of all Needs, Worthy of all Praise.

5311 Neither the Covetous nor the Boasters have any place in the Good Pleasure of Allah. The Covetous are particularly insidious, as their avarice and miserliness not only keep back the gifts of Allah from men, but their pernicious example dries up the streams of Charity in others.

5312 It is Charity in Allah's Way that is specially in view here. If people are selfish and withhold their hand, they only injure themselves. They do not hurt Allah's Cause, for He is independent of all needs, and He will find other means of assisting His more meagerly endowed servants; He is worthy of all praise in His

25. We sent aforetime our messengers with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance(5313) (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice; and We sent down(5314) Iron,(5315) in which is (material for) mighty war, as well as many benefits for mankind, that Allah may test who it is that will help, Unseen,(5316) Him and His messengers:(5317) For Allah is Full of Strength, Exalted in Might(5318) (and able to enforce His Will).

5313 Three things are mentioned as gifts of Allah. In concrete terms they are the Book, the Balance, and Iron, which stand as emblems of three things which hold society together, *viz.,* Revelation, which commands Good and forbids Evil; Justice, which gives to each person his due; and the strong arm of the Law, which maintains sanctions for evildoers. For *Balance,* see also 42:17, and n. 4550.

5314 *Sent down: anzala;* in the sense of revealed to man the use of certain things, created in him the capacity of understanding and using them: *Cf* 39:6: "sent down for you eight head of cattle in pairs".

5315 *Iron:* the most useful metal known to man. Out of it is made steel, and from steel and iron are made implements of war, such as swords, spears, guns, etc., as well as instruments of peace, such as ploughshares, bricklayers' trowels, architects' and engineers' instruments, etc. Iron stands as the emblem of Strength, Power, Discipline, Law's sanctions, etc. Iron and steel industries have also been the foundation of the prosperity and power of modern manufacturing nations. (R).

5316 In 21:49, I have translated "in their most secret thoughts" for the more literal "unseen" *(bi al ghayb).* Perhaps the more literal "unseen" may do if understood in the adverbial sense as explained in 35:18,— n. 3902. The sincere man will help the Cause, whether he is seen or brought under notice or not.

5317 To help Allah and His messengers is to help their Cause. It is to give men an opportunity of striving and fighting for His Cause and proving their true mettle, for thus is their spirit tested. As explained in the next line, Allah in Himself is Full of Strength, Exalted in Power, and Able to enforce His Will, and He has no need of others' assistance.

5318 *Cf.* 22:40 and n. 2818. "Strength" is specific; Power or Might is more abstract, the ability to enforce what is willed.

26. And We sent Noah and Abraham, and established in their line Prophethood and Revelation: and some of them(5319) were on right guidance. But many of them became rebellious transgressors.

5319 *Some of them: i.e.,* of their line, or posterity, or Ummah. When the Book that was given to them became corrupted, many of them followed their own fancies and became transgressors.

27. Then, in their wake, We followed them up with (others of) Our messengers: We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel; and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him Compassion and Mercy.(5320) But the Monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them:(5321) (We commanded) only the seeking for the Good Pleasure of Allah. but that they did not foster(5322) as they should have done. Yet We bestowed, on those among them who believed,(5323) their (due) reward, but many of them are rebellious transgressors.(5324)

5320 The chief characteristic of the teaching in the Gospels is humility and other-worldliness. The first blessings in the Sermon on the Mount are on "the poor in spirit", "they that mourn", and they that are "meek" (Matt. 5:3-5). Christ's disciples were enjoined to "take no thought for the morrow", and told: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Matt. 6:34). They were also commanded "that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39). These are fragmentary presentments of an imperfect philosophy as seen through monastic eyes. Insofar as they represent pity, sympathy with suffering, and deeds of mercy, they represent the spirit of Christ.

5321 But Allah's Kingdom requires also courage, resistance to evil, the firmness, law, and discipline which will enforce justice among men. It requires to mingle with men, so that they can uphold the standard of Truth, against odds if necessary. These were lost sight of in Monasticism, which was not prescribed by Allah.

5322 Allah certainly requires that men shall renounce the idle pleasures of this world, and turn to the Path which leads to Allah's Good Pleasure. But that does not mean gloomy lives, ("they that mourn"), nor perpetual and formal prayers in isolation. Allah's service is done through pure lives in the turmoil of this world. This spirit was lost, or at least not fostered by monastic institutions. On the contrary, a great part of the "struggle and striving" for noble lives was suppressed.

5323 Many of them lost true Faith, or had their Faith corrupted by superstitions. But those who continued firm in Faith saw the natural development of Religion in Islam. Their previous belief was not a disadvantage to them, but helped them, because they kept it free from false and selfish prejudices. These are the ones who are further addressed at the beginning of verse 28 below.

5324 The corruptions in the Christian Church, the hair-splitting disputes, and mutual strife and hatred of sects had become a scandal by the time that the light ofIslam came into the world. The pages of Gibbon's great History bear witness. Not only had the religion become void of grace, but the lives of the people, priests and laity, had fallen into great depths of degradation. See remarks in my Appendix V, and the general picture in Kingsley's *Hypatia.*

28. O ye that believe!(5325) Fear Allah, and believe in His Messenger, and He will bestow on you a double(5326) portion of His Mercy: He will provide for you a Light by which ye(5327) shall walk (straight in

your path), and He will forgive you (your past):(5328) for Allah is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful.

5325 From the context before (see n. 5323 above) and after (see next note). this is held to refer to the Christians and People of the Book who kept their Faith true and undefiled.

5326 The double portion refers to the past and the future. As noted in the last note, this passage is addressed to the Christians and the People of the Book, who, when honestly facing the question of the new Revelation in Islam, find in it the fulfilment of previous revelations, and therefore believe in Allah's Messenger Muhammad, and walk by the new Light. Their previous merits will be duly recognised, and they will be treated on fully equal terms in the new Ummah. This is their double share, not necessarily more in quantity than that of their brethren in Islam who passed through no other gate, but having a twofold aspect.

5327 As this refers to the Christians and the People of the Book, the following saying of Christ in his last days may interest them: "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you . . . While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them". (John, 12:35-36). The light of Christ's Gospel soon departed; his Church was enveloped in darkness; then came the light again, in the fuller light of Islam. And they are asked to believe in the Light, and to walk in it. *Cf.* also 57:12, and n. 5288 above.

5328 Any wrongs they may have committed through ignorance or misconceptions in their previous religion will be forgiven them, as they have seen the new Light and walk by it.

29. That the People of the Book may know that they have no power(5329) whatever over the Grace of Allah, that (His) Grace is (entirely) in His Hand, to bestow it on whomsoever He wills. For Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding.

5329 Let not any race, or people, or community, or group, believe that they have exclusive possession of Allah's Grace, or that they can influence its grant or its withholding. Allah's Grace is free, and entirely controlled by Him, independently of any priests and privileged people. He dispenses it according to His own wise and Holy Will and Plan; and to His Grace there is no limit.



58. Al Mujadilah (The Woman who Pleads)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Allah has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman who pleads(5330) with thee concerning her husband and carries her complaint (in prayer) to Allah. and Allah (always) hears the arguments between both(5331) sides among you: for Allah hears and sees (all things).

5330 The immediate occasion was what happened to Khawlah bint Tha'labah, wife of Aws son of Samit. Though in Islam, he divorced her by an old Pagan custom: the formula was known as Zihar, and consisted of the words "Thou art to me as the back of my mother". This was held by Pagan custom to imply a divorce and freed the husband from any responsibility for conjugal duties, but did not leave the wife free to leave the husband's home, or to contract a second marriage. Such a custom was in any case degrading to a woman. It was particularly hard on Khawlah, for she loved her husband and pleaded that she had little children who she had no resources herself to support and whom under *Zihar* her husband was not bound to support. She urged her plea to the Prophet and in prayer to Allah. Her just plea was accepted, and this iniquitous custom, based on false words, was abolished. See also n. 3670 to 33:4.

5331 For He is a just God, and will not allow human customs or pretences to trample on the just rights of the weakest of His creatures.

2. If any men among you divorce their wives by Zihar(5332) (calling them mothers), they cannot be their mothers: None can be their mothers except those who gave them birth. And in fact they use words (both) iniquitous(5333) and false: but truly Allah is one that blots out(5334) (sins), and forgives (again and again).

5332 See n. 5330 above.

5333 Such words are false in fact and iniquitous, inasmuch as they are unfair to the wife and unseemly in decent society.

5334 *Cf.* 4:99 and 22:60. Were it not that Allah in His Mercy makes allowances for our weaknesses and the various grades of motives that actuate us, such conduct would be inexpiable. But He prescribes expiation as in the next verse, because He wishes to blot out what is wrong and give us a chance to reform by His forgiveness.

3. But those who divorce their wives by Zihar, then wish to go back(5335) on the words they uttered,- (It is ordained that such a one) should free a slave before they touch each other: Thus are ye admonished to perform: and Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.

5335 If Zihar were to be ignored as if the words were never uttered, it would mean that men may foolishly resort to it without penalty. It is therefore recognised in respect of the penalty which the man incurs, but safeguards the woman's rights. She can sue for maintenance for herself and her children, but her husband could not claim his conjugal rights. If it was a hasty act and he repented of it, he could not claim his conjugal rights until after the performance of his penalty as provided below. If she loved him, as in Khawlah's case, she could also herself sue for conjugal rights in the legal sense of the term and compel her husband to perform the penalty and resume marital relations.

4. And if any has not (the wherewithal),(5336) he should fast for two months consecutively before they touch each other. But if any is unable to do so, he should feed sixty indigent ones.(5337) This, that ye may show your faith in Allah(5338) and His Messenger. Those are limits (set by) Allah. For those who reject (Him), there is a grievous Penalty.(5339)

5336 *Cf.* 4:92. The penalty is: to get a slave his freedom, whether it is your own slave or you purchase his freedom from another; if that is not possible, to fast for two months consecutively (in the manner of the *Ramadan* fast); if that is not possible, to feed sixty poor. See next note.

5337 There is a great deal of learned argument among the jurists as to the precise requirements of Canon Law under the term "feeding" the indigent. For example, it is laid down that half a *Sa'* of wheat or a full *Sa'* of dates or their equivalent in money would fulfil the requirements, a *Sa* ' being a measure corresponding roughly to about 9 lbs. of wheat in weight. Others hold that a *Mudd* measure equivalent to about 2 1/4 lbs. would be sufficient. This would certainly be nearer the daily ration of a man. It is better to take the spirit of the text in its plain simplicity, and say that an indigent man should be given enough to eat for two

meals a day. The sixty indigent ones fed for a day would be equivalent to a single individual fed for sixty days, or two for thirty days, and so on. But there is no need to go into minutiae in such matters.

5338 These penalties in the alternative are prescribed, that we may show our repentance and Faith and our renunciation of "iniquity and falsehood" (verse 2 above), whatever our circumstances may be.

5339 It would seem that this refers to the spiritual Penalty in the Hereafter for not complying with the small penalty here prescribed. The next verse would then refer to the bigger "humiliating Penalty" for "resistance" to Allah's Law generally.

5. Those who resist Allah and His Messenger will be humbled to dust, as were those before them: for We have already sent down Clear Signs. And the Unbelievers (will have) a humiliating Penalty,-

6. On the Day that Allah will raise them all up (again) and show them the Truth (and meaning)(5340) of their conduct. Allah has reckoned its (value), though they may have forgotten it, for Allah is Witness to all things.

5340 This phrase, "Allah will tell them the truth of their deeds (or their doings or their conduct)" occurs frequendy. See 5:48, n. 762; 5:105, n. 811; 6:60; 9:94; etc. In this life there is a certain mist or illusion in our spiritual sight. We see things from different angles and dispute about them; we hide real motives, and pretend to virtues which we do not possess; others may attribute such virtues to us, and we may come to believe it ourselves; we conceive likes and hatreds on insufficient grounds; we forget what we should remember, and remember what we should forget. Our vision is narrow, and our values are false. On the Day of Account all this will be remedied. Not only will true values be restored, but we shall ourselves see the inwardness of things in our own lives, which we never saw before.

7. Seest thou not that Allah doth know (all) that is in the heavens and on earth? There is not a secret consultation between three, but He makes the fourth among them, -(5341) Nor between five but He makes the sixth,- nor between fewer nor more, but He is in their midst, wheresoever they be: In the end will He tell them the truth of their conduct, on the Day of Judgment. For Allah has full knowledge of all things.

5341 Secrecy is a relative and limited term among ourselves. There is nothing hidden or unknown to Allah. Usually secrecy implies fear or distrust, plotting or wrongdoing. But all is open before Allah's sight.

8. Turnest thou not thy sight towards those who were forbidden secret counsels(5342) yet revert to that which they were forbidden (to do)? And they hold secret counsels among themselves for iniquity and hostility, and disobedience to the Messenger. And when they come to thee, they salute thee,(5343) not as Allah salutes thee, (but in crooked ways): And they say to themselves, "Why does not Allah punish us for our words?"(5344) Enough for them is Hell: In it will they burn, and evil is that destination!

5342 When the Muslim Brotherhood was acquiring strength in Madinah, and the forces of disruption were being disconfited in open fight against the Messenger of Righteousness, the wicked resorted to duplicity and secret intrigues, in which the ringleaders were the disaffected Jews and the Hypocrites, whose machinations have been frequently referred to in the Qur'an. *E.g.,* see 2:8-16; and 4:142-145.

5343 The salutation of Allah was (and is) "Peace!" But the enemies, who had not the courage to fight openly often twisted the words, and by using a word like *Sam,* which meant "Death!" or "Destruction!" instead of *Salam!* (Peace!), they thought they were secretly venting their spite and yet apparendy using a polite form of salutation. *Cf.* 2:104, and n. 107, where another similar trick is exposed.

5344 The enemies derisively enjoyed their trick (see last note) according to their own perverted mentality. They asked blasphemously, "Why does not Allah punish us?" The answer is given; there *is* a Punishment, far greater than they imagine; it will come in good time; it will be the final Punishment after Judgement: it is delayed in order to give them a chance of repentance and reformation.

9. O ye who believe! When ye hold secret counsel, do it not for iniquity and hostility, and disobedience to the Prophet; but do it for righteousness and self-restraint;(5345) and fear Allah, to Whom ye shall be brought back.

5345 Ordinarily secrecy implies deeds of darkness, something which men have to hide; see the next verse. But there are good deeds which may be concerted and done in secret: *e.g.,* charity, or the prevention of mischief, or the defeat of the dark plots of evil. The determining factor is the motive. Is the man doing some wrong or venting his spite, or trying to disobey a lawful command? Or is he doing some good, which out of modesty or self-renunciation he does not want known, or is he in a righteous cause defeating the machinations of Evil, which may involve great sacrifice of himself?

10. Secret counsels are only (inspired) by the Evil One, in order that he may cause grief to the Believers; but he cannot harm them in the least, except as(5346) Allah permits; and on Allah let the Believers put their trust.

5346 Evil can harm no one who is good, except insofar as (1) there is some question of trial in Allah's Universal Plan, or (2) what appears to be harm may be real good. Nothing happens without Allah's will and permission. And we must always trust Him, and not our cleverness or any adventitious circumstances that draw us the least bit from the path of rectitude.

11. O ye who believe! When ye are told to make room in the assemblies,(5347) (spread out and) make room: (ample) room will Allah provide for you. And when ye are told to rise up,(5348) rise up Allah will rise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted (mystic) Knowledge.(5349) And Allah is well- acquainted with all ye do.

5347 Even when a great man or a Leader comes into an Assembly, we are not to press forward without discipline, as it causes inconvenience to him and detriment to public business. Nor are we to shut out other people who have equal rights to be in the Assembly. We must spread out, for Allah's earth is spacious, and so are our opportunities.

5348 Rising up is a mark of respect. Just as those who obey soon become worthy of command, so those who honour where honour is due, become themselves worthy of honour, in various degrees according to their capacities. "Rise up" may also here imply: 'when the Assembly is dismissed, do not loiter about'.

5349 Faith makes all people equal in the Kingdom of Allah , as regards the essentials of citizenship in the Kingdom. But there is leadership, and rank and degree, joined with greater or less responsibility, and that depends on true knowledge and insight. (R).

12. O ye who believe! When ye consult the Messenger in private,(5350) spend something in charity before your private consultation. That will be best for you, and most conducive to purity (of conduct).(5351) But if ye find not (the wherewithal), Allah is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful.

5350 In the Kingdom of Allah all instruction or consultation is open and free. But human nature is weak. And people want special instruction or private consultation with the Teacher from one of several motives: (1) they may have, or think they have, a special case, which they are not willing to disclose to their brethren in general; (2) they may have some sense of delicacy or dignity, which can only be satisfied by a private interview; (3) they may even be selfish enough to want to monopolise the Teacher's time. These motives are, in an ascending order, worth discouraging; and yet, considering the weakness of human nature, they cannot be reprobated to the extent of shutting out their victims from chances of improvement. It is therefore recommended that they spend something in charity for the good of their poorer brethren before they indulge in such weaknesses.

5351 The charity is a sort of expiation for their pardonable weakness. Having made some monetary sacrifice for their poorer brethren they could face them with less shame, and the charity would direct their attention to the need for purifying their motives and conduct At the same time, this special charity is not made obligatory, lest such persons should be shut out altogether from chances of the higher teaching on account of their pardonable foibles.

13. Is it that ye are afraid of spending sums(5352) in charity before your private consultation (with him)? If, then, ye do not so, and Allah forgives you, then (at least) establish regular prayer; practise(5353) regular

charity; and obey Allah and His Messenger. And Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

5352 Note the plural here, *Sadaqat,* instead of the singular, *Sadaqah* in verse 12 above. While people with the foibles described in n. 5350 may be willing to spend "something" (small) in charity for a special consultation occasionally, they may be frightened of spending large sums when their needs for consultation may be numerous. What is to be done then? Are they to be shut out altogether? No. They are asked to be punctilious in the discharge of their normal duties of at least normal regular prayers and regular charity, "if Allah forgives you", *i.e.,* if Allah's Messenger relieves them of further special contributions such as those noted in verse 12. This condition, "if Allah forgives you", provides the safeguard against the abuse of the privilege. The messenger would know in each case what is best for the individual and for the community.

5353 Zakah, which I have translated "regular charity", was instituted about A.H. 2.

14. Turnest thou not thy attention to those(5354) who turn (in friendship) to such as have the Wrath of Allah upon them?(5355) They are neither of you nor of them, and they swear to falsehood knowingly.(5356)

5354 This refers to the Hypocrites of Madinah who pretended to be in Islam but intrigued with the Jews. See references as given in n. 5342 above.

5355 By this time the Jews of Madinah and the Jewish tribes around had become actively hostile to Islam, and were being sharply called to account for their treachery.

5356 They knew that as Muslims their duty was to refrain from the intrigues of the enemies of Islam and to assist Islam against them.

15. Allah has prepared for them a severe Penalty: evil indeed are their deeds.

16. They have made their oaths a screen (for their misdeeds): thus they obstruct (men)(5357) from the Path of Allah. therefore shall they have a humiliating Penalty.

5357 A false man, by swearing that he is true, makes his falsehood all the more heinous. He stands in the way of other people accepting Truth. He gives a handle to the cynics and the sceptics.

17. Of no profit whatever to them, against Allah, will be their riches(5358) nor their sons: they will be Companions of the Fire, to dwell therein (for aye)!

5358 They may arrogantly boast of riches and alliances and followers in manpower. But what are such worldly advantages before the Throne of the Disposer of all events? They must come to utter misery.

18. One day will Allah raise them all up (for Judgment): then will they swear to Him(5359) as they swear to you: And they think that they have something (to stand upon). No, indeed! they are but liars!

5359 When Judgement is established, and before they realise the Truth, they may think (as now) that some oaths or excuses will save them. But they have not now-much less will they have then-any footing to stand upon. Falsehood is falsehood, and must perish. They must learn the worthlessness of their falsehood.

19. The Evil One has got the better of them:(5360) so he has made them lose the remembrance of Allah. They are the Party of the Evil One. Truly, it is the Party of the Evil One that will perish!

5360 Man's original nature as created by Allah is good (30:30, and n. 3541). It is because man, in spite of the warnings he has received, allows Evil to get the mastery over him, that man forgets Allah and the divine qualities which Allah gave him. The result of the perversion is that man becomes a partisan of Evil, and as such dooms himself to perdition (see also n. 3556).

20. Those who resist Allah and His Messenger will be among those most humiliated.(5361)

5361 There are various degrees of humiliation in the final state in the spiritual world. But the worst is the humiliation of being numbered among those who ignominiously attempted to resist the Irresistible.

21. Allah has decreed: "It is I and My messengers who must prevail": For Allah is One full of strength, able to enforce His Will.(5362)

5362 For the meaning of *'Aziz,* see n. 2818 to 22:40.

22. Thou wilt not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day, loving those who resist Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers or their sons,(5363) or their brothers, or their kindred. For such He has written Faith(5364) in their hearts, and strengthened them with a spirit(5365) from Himself. And He will admit them to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, to dwell therein (for ever). Allah will be well pleased with them, and they with Him.(5366) They are the Party(5367) of Allah. Truly it is the Party of Allah that will achieve Felicity.

5363 If anyone believes in Allah and His goodness and justice, and in the Hereafter, in which all true values will be restored he will never love evil or wrongdoing or rebellion against Allah, even if these things are found in his nearest kith and kin.

5364 Faith in Allah is indelibly written on the tablets of their hearts and they can never be false to Allah.

5365 *Cf.* 2:87 and 253, where it is said that Allah strengthened the Prophet Jesus with the Holy Spirit. Here we learn that all good and righteous men are strengthened by Allah with the Holy Spirit. If anything, the phrase used here is stronger, "a spirit from Himself'. Whenever anyone offers his heart in faith and purity to Allah, Allah accepts it, engraves that Faith on the seeker's heart, and further fortifies him with the divine spirit, which we can no more define adequately than we can define in human language the nature and attributes of Allah.

5366 Again we have the doctrine of Allah's Good Pleasure as the highest goal of man, the spiriuial heaven which he achieves by a life of purity and faith. He not only attains Allah's Good Pleasure as the crown of his felicity, but his own nature is so far transformed to the pattern of Allah's original creation that his own good pleasure is in nothing but in Allah's Good Pleasure. The mutual good pleasure shows the heights to which man can attain. (R).

5367 This is in antithesis to the Party of the Evil One, mentioned in verse 19 above. That Party of Evil will perish, but while it has its run in the scheme of the present world, the Party of Truth and Reality may be Figuratively called the Party of Allah, even though all Creation is Allah's in another sense.

59. Al Hashr (The Mustering)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, let it declare the Praises and Glory(5368) of Allah. for He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

5368 This verse, introducing the Surah is identical with 57:1, introducing S. 57. The theme of both is the wonderful working of Allah's Plan and Providence . In the one case it referred to the conquest of Makkah and taught the lesson of humility. In this case it refers to the dislodgement of the treacherous Banu al Nadir from their nest if intrigue in the neighbourhood of Madinah, practically without a blow. See next note.

2. It is He Who got out the Unbelievers among the People of the Book(5369) from their homes at the first gathering (of the forces). Little did ye think that they would get out:(5370) And they thought that their fortresses would defend them from Allah. But the (Wrath of) Allah Came to them from quarters(5371) from which they little expected (it), and cast terror into their hearts, so that they destroyed their dwellings by their own(5372) hands and the hands of the Believers, take warning, then, O ye with eyes (to see)!

5369 This refers to the Jewish tribe of Banu al Nadir whose intrigues and treachery nearly undid die. Muslim cause during the perilous days of the battle Uhud in Shawwal, A.H. 3. Four months after, in Rabi' al Awwal, A.H. 4, steps were taken against them. They were asked to leave the strategic position which they occupied, about three miles south of Madinah, endangering the very existence of the Ummah in Madinah. At first they demurred, relying on their fortresses and on their secret alliances with the Pagans of Makkah and the Hypocrites of Madinah. But when the Muslim army was gathered to punish them and actually besieged them for some days, their allies stirred not a finger in their aid, and they were wise enough to leave. Most of them joined their brethren in Syria , which they were permitted to do, after being disarmed. Some of them joined their brethren in Khaybar: see n. 3705 to 33:27. Banu al Nadir richly deserved punishment, but their lives were spared, and they were allowed to carry away their goods and chattels.

5370 That is, without actual hostilities, and the shedding of precious Muslim blood.

5371 They had played a double game. Originally they were sworn allies of the Madinah Muslims under the Prophet, but they secretly intrigued with the Makkah Pagans under Abu Sufyan and the Madinah Hypocrites. They even tried treacherously to take the life of the Prophet while he was on a visit to them, breaking both the laws of hospitality and their own sworn alliance. They thought the Pagan Quraysh of Makkah and the Hypocrites of Madinah would help them, but they did not help them. On the contrary the eleven day siege showed them their own helplessness. Their supplies were cut off: the exigencies of the siege necessitated the destruction of their outlying palm trees; and the unexpected turn in their fortunes disheartened diem. Their hearts were struck with terror and they capitulated. But they laid waste their homes before they left: see next note.

5372 Their lives were spared, and they were allowed ten days in which to remove themselves, their families, and such goods as they could carry. In order to leave no habitations for the Muslims they demolished their own houses and laid waste their property, to complete the destruction which the operations of war had already caused at the hands of the besieging force of the Muslims.

3. And had it not been that Allah had decreed banishment for them,(5373) He would certainly have punished them in this world: And in the Hereafter they shall (certainly) have the Punishment of the Fire.

5373 Banishment was a comparatively mild punishment for them, but the Providence of Allah had decreed that a chance should be given to them even though they were a treacherous foe. Within two years, their brethren the Banu Qurayzah showed that they had not profited by their example, and had to be dealt with in another way: see 33:26 and notes.

4. That is because they resisted Allah and His Messenger. and if any one resists Allah,(5374) verily Allah is severe in Punishment.

5374 The punishment of Banu al Nadir was because in breaking their plighted word with the Messenger and in actively resisting Allah's Message and supporting the enemies of that Message, they rebelled against His Holy Will. For such treason and rebellion the punishment is severe, and yet in this case it was seasoned with Mercy.

5. Whether ye cut down (O ye Muslim!) The tender palm-trees, or ye left them standing on their roots, it was(5375) by leave of Allah, and in order that He might(5376) cover with shame the rebellious transgresses.

5375 The unnecessary cutting down of fruit trees or destruction of crops, or any wanton destruction whatever in war, is forbidden by the law and practice of Islam. But some destruction may be necessary for putting pressure on the enemy, and to that extent it is allowed. But as far as possible, consistently with that objective of military operations, such trees should not be cut down. Both these principles are in accordance with the Divine Will, and were followed by the Muslims in their expedition.

5376 The arrogance of Banu al Nadir had to be humbled, and their power for mischief destroyed.

6. What Allah has bestowed on His Messenger (and taken away) from them - for this ye made no expedition with either cavalry or camelry:(5377) but Allah gives power to His messengers over any He pleases: and Allah(5378) has power over all things.

5377 Neither cavalry nor troops mounted on camels were employed in the siege. In fact the enemy surrendered at the first onset. See 59:2, and n. 5369 above.

5378 Allah accomplishes His Purpose in various ways, according to His Wise and Holy Will and Plan. In some cases a fight is necessary. In some cases the godly attain their objective and overawe the forces of evil without actual fighting.

7. What Allah has bestowed(5379) on His Messenger (and taken away) from the people(5380) of the townships,- belongs to Allah,- to His Messenger(5381) and to kindred and orphans, the needy and the wayfarer; In order that it may not (merely) make a circuit between the wealthy among you. So take what the Messenger assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you.(5381-A) And fear Allah. for Allah is strict in Punishment.

5379 The Jews had originally come from outside Arabia , and seized on the land near Madinah. They refused to adapt themselves to the people of Arabia , and were in fact a morn in the side of the genuine Arabs of Madinah. Their dispossession is therefore a restoration of the land to its original people. But the word *Fa'* is here understood in a technical sense, as meaning property abandoned by the enemy or taken from him without a formal war. In that sense it is distinguished from *Anfal,* or spoils, taken after actual fighting, about which see 8:1, 41.

5380 *The people of the townships: the* townships were the Jewish setlements round Madinah, of Banu al Nadir and possibly of other tribes. *Cf.* the "townships" mentioned in 59:14 below. The reference cannot be to Wadi al Qura (Valley of Towns), now Mada'in Salih, which was subjugated after Khaybar and Fadak in A.H. 7, unless this verse is later than the rest of the Surah.

5381 *Belongs to Allah: i.e.,* to Allah's Cause; and the beneficiaries are further detailed. No shares are fixed; they depend upon circumstances, and are left to the judgement of the Leader. Compare a similar list of those entitled to Charity, in 2:177, but the two lists refer to different circumstances and have different beneficiaries in addition to the portion common to both.

5381-A Alternatively these words may be translated: "So take what the Messenger gives you, and refrain from what he prohibits you". [Eds.].

8. (Some part is due) to the indigent Muhajirs,(5382) those who were expelled from their homes and their property, while seeking Grace from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure, and aiding Allah and His Messenger. such are indeed the sincere ones:-

5382 The *Muhajirs* are those who forsook their homes and property in Makkah in order to assist the Prophet in his migration to Madinah *(Hijrah).* Their devotion and sincerity were proved beyond doubt by their self-denial, and they were now to be rewarded.

9. But those who before them, had homes(5383) (in Medina) and had adopted the Faith,- show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls,- they are the ones that achieve prosperity.

5383 This refers to the *Ansar* (the Helpers), the people of Madinah, who accepted Islam when it was persecuted in Makkah, and who invited the Prophet to join them and become their Leader in MadTnah. The Hijrah was possible because of their good will and their generous hospitality. They entertained the Prophet and all the refugees *(Muhajirs)* who came with him. The most remarkable ties of full brotherhood were established between individual members of the one group and the other. Until the Ummah got its own resources, the Helpers regularly gave and the Refugees regularly received. The Helpers counted it a privilege to entertain the Refugees, and even the poor vied with the rich in their spirit of self-sacrifice. When the confiscated land and property of Banu Nadir was divided, and the major portion was assigned to the refugees, there was not the least jealousy on the part of the Helpers. They rejoiced in the good fortune of their brethren. And incidentally they were themselves relieved of anxiety and responsibility on their behalf.

10. And those who came(5384) after them say: "Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith, and leave not, in our hearts, rancour (or sense of injury)(5385) against those who have believed. Our Lord! Thou art indeed Full of Kindness, Most Merciful."

5384 *Those that came after them:* the immediate meaning would refer to later arrivals in Madinah or later accessions to Islam, compared with the early *Muhajirs.* But the general meaning would include all future comers into the House of Islam. They pray, not only for themselves, but for all their brethren, and above all, they pray that their hearts may be purified of any desire or tendency to disparage the work or virtues of other Muslims or to feel any jealousy on account of their successes or good fortune.

5385 *Cf.* 7:43, and n. 1021.

11. Hast thou not observed the Hypocrites say to their misbelieving brethren among the People of the Book? -(5386) "If ye are expelled, we too will go out with you, and we will never hearken to any one in your affair; and if ye are attacked (in fight) we will help you". But Allah is witness(5387) that they are indeed liars.

5386 The Jews of Banu al Nadir had been assured by the Hypocrites of Madinah of their support to their cause. They had thought that their defection from the Prophet's Cause would so weaken that cause that they would save their friends. But they never intended to undertake any act involving self-sacrifice on their part; if they had helped their Jewish friends, it was not likely that they would have succeeded; and if they had actually gone to the fight, they had neither valour nor fervour to support them, and they would have fled ignominiously before the discipline, earnestness, and Faith of the men of Islam.

5387 For this actually happened. They never stirred a finger for the Jews, and they never intended to do so. And Allah knows all their motives and secrets: *cf.* 47:26, n. 4850.

12. If they are expelled, never will they go out with them; and if they are attacked (in fight), they will never help them; and if they do help them, they will turn their backs; so they will receive no help.(5388)

5388 All hopes founded on iniquity and treachery are vain and illusory. There may be honour among thieves. But there is no honour as between dishonest intriguers, and they are not likely to get any real help from any quarter.

13. Of a truth ye are More feared in their hearts, then Allah.(5389) This is because they are men devoid of understanding.

5389 Being Unbelievers they fear you more than they fear Allah, because your valour they see, but in Allah they do not believe. An alternative construction would yield the meaning: "Ye Muslims, even if ye are weak numerically, or they may have other seeming advantages, ye are really stronger than they are, because they have a wholesome fear in the minds, and Allah sends such fear into the hearts of wrongdoers!" (R).

14. They will not fight you (even) together, except in fortified townships, or from behind walls.(5390) Strong is their fighting (spirit) amongst themselves: thou wouldst think they were united, but their hearts are divided:(5391) that is because they are a people devoid of wisdom.

5390 They have not sufficient self-confidence or *elan* to sustain them in a fight except under material advantages or defences. Even if they join forces, they have not sufficient trust in each other to expose themselves to open fighting.

5391 'It may be that they have a strong fighting spirit among themselves, but they have no Cause to fight for and no common objective to achieve. The Makkan Pagans want to keep their own unjust autocracy; the Madinah Hypocrites wish for their own domination in Madinah; and the Jews want their racial superiority established over the Arabs, of whose growing union and power they are jealous.' Their pretended alliance could not stand the strain of either a defeat or a victory. If they had been wise, they would have accepted the Cause of Unity, Faith, and Truth.

15. Like those who lately(5392) preceded them, they have tasted the evil result of their conduct; and (in the Hereafter there is) for them a grievous Penalty;-

5392 The immediate reference was probably to the Jewish goldsmith tribe of Banu Qaynuqa', who were also settled in a fortified township near Madinah. They were also punished and banished for their treachery, about a month after the battle of Badr, in which the Makkan Pagans had suffered a signal defeat, in *Shawwal,* A.H. 2. Banu al Nadir evidently did not take that lesson to heart. The general meaning is that we must learn to be on our guard against the consequences of treachery and sin. No fortuitous alliances with other men of iniquity will save us.

16. (Their allies deceived them), like the Evil One, when he says to man, "Deny Allah.: but when(5393) (man) denies Allah, (the Evil One) says, "I am free of thee: I do fear Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!"

5393 An apt simile. Evil tempts man in all sorts of ways, and presents seductive promises and alliances to delude him into the belief that he will be saved from the consequences. The Evil One says, "Deny Allah": which means not merely denial in words, but denial in acts—disobedience of Allah's Law, deviation from the path of rectitude. When the sinner gets well into the mire, the Evil One says cynically: "How can I help you against Allah? Don't you see I am afraid of Him? All our alliances and understandings were moonshine. You must bear the consequences of your own folly."

17. The end of both will be that they will go into the Fire, dwelling therein for ever. Such is the reward of the wrong-doers.

18. O ye who believe! Fear Allah,(5394) and let every soul look to what (provision) it has(5394) sent forth for the morrow. Yea, fear Allah.(5395-A) for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.

5394 The "fear of Allah" is akin to love; for it means the fear of offending Him or doing anything wrong that will forfeit His Good Pleasure. This is *Taqwa,* which implies self-restraint, guarding ourselves from all sin, wrong, and injustice, and the positive doing of good. See 2:2, and n. 26.

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implies self-restraint, guarding ourselves from all sin, wrong, and injustice, and the positive doing of good. See 2:2, and n. 26.

5395-A The repetition emphasises both sides of *Taqwa:* "let your soul fear to do wrong and let it do every act of righteousness; for Allah observes both your inner motives and your acts, and in His scheme of things everything will have its due consequences.

19. And be ye not like those who forgot Allah;(5396) and He made them forget their own souls! Such are the rebellious transgressors!

5396 To forget Allah is to forget the only Eternal Reality. As we are only reflected realities, how can we understand or do justice to or remember ourselves, when we forget the very source of our being? (R).

20. Not equal are the Companions of the Fire and the Companions of the Garden: it is the Companions of the Garden, that will achieve Felicity.(5397)

5397 The others, the Companions of the Fire, will find their lives wasted and nullified. Their capacities will be rendered inert and their wishes will end in futility.

21. Had We sent down this Qur´an on a mountain,(5398) verily, thou wouldst have seen it humble itself and cleave(5399) asunder for fear of Allah. Such are the similitudes which We propound to men, that they may reflect.

5398 There are two ideas associated in men's minds with a mountain: one is its height, and the other that it is rocky, stony, hard. Now comes the metaphor. The Revelation of Allah is so sublime that even the highest mountains humble themselves before it. The Revelation is so powerful and convincing that even the hard rock splits asunder under it. Will man then be so arrogant as to consider himself superior to it, or so hardhearted as not to be affected by its powerful Message? The answer is "No" for unspoilt man; 'Yes" for man when degraded by sin to be the vilest of creatures.

5399 *Cf.* 7:143, and n. 1103, where, in the story of Moses, the Mount became as dust "when the Lord manifested His Glory". Also *C f.* 33:72, and n. 3778, where the mountains are mentioned as an emblem of stability, but as refusing to accept the Trust (*Amanah)* because they felt themselves to be too humble to be equal to such a tremendous Trust. (R).

22. Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god;-(5400) Who knows (all things) both secret and open; He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

5400 Here follows a passage of great sublimity, summing up the attributes of Allah. In this verse, we have the general attributes, which give us the fundamental basis on which we can form some idea of Allah. We start with the proposition that there is nothing else like Him. We think of His Unity; all the varying and conflicting forces in Creation are controlled by Him and look to Him, and we can never get a true idea of Him unless we understand the meaning of Unity. His knowledge extends to everything seen and unseen, present and future, near and far, in being and not in being: in fact these contrasts, which apply to our knowledge, do not apply to Him. His Grace and His Mercy are unbounded: see 1:1, and n. 19; and unless we realise these, we can have no true conception of our position in the working of His Will and Plan. (R).

23. Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god;-(5401) the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety,(5402) the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme:(5403) Glory to Allah. (High is He) above the partners(5404) they attribute to Him.

5401 This phrase is repeated from the last verse in order to lead us to the contemplation of some other attributes of Allah, after we have realised those which form our fundamental conceptions of Allah. See the preceding and the following note.

5402 How can a translator reproduce the sublimity and the comprehensiveness of the magnificent Arabic words, which mean so much in a single symbol? (1) "The Sovereign" in our human language implies the one undisputed authority which is entitled to give commands and to receive obedience, and which in fact receives obedience; the power which enforces law and justice. (2) Human authority may be misused, but in the tide "die Holy One", we postulate a Being free from all stain or evil, and replete with the highest Purity. (3) *"Salam"* has not only the idea of Peace as opposed to Conflict, but wholeness as opposed to defects: hence our paraphrase "Source of Peace and Perfection". (4) *Mu'min,* one who entertains Faith, who gives Faith to others, who is never false to the Faith that others place in him; hence our paraphrase "Guardian of Faith". (5) "Preserver of Safety": guarding all from danger, corruption, loss, etc.: the word is used for the Qur'an in 5:48. These are the attributes of kindness and benevolence: in the next note are described the attributes of power.

5403 See last note. (6) Allah is not only good, but He can carry out His Will. (7) And if anything resists or opposes Him, His Will prevails. (8) For He is Supreme, above all tilings and creatures. Thus we come back to tile Unity with which we began in verse 22.

5404 Such being Allah's attributes of Goodness and Power, how foolish is it of men to worship anything else but Him? Who can approach His glory and goodness?

24. He is Allah, the Creator,(5405) the Evolver, the Bestower of Forms(5406) (or Colours). To Him belong(5407) the Most Beautiful Names: whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare His Praises and Glory:(5408) and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

5405 Allah's attributes of Goodness and Power having been referred to, we are now told of His creative energy, of which three aspects are here mentioned, as explained in the following note. The point is emphasised that He does not merely create and leave alone; He goes on fashioning, evolving new forms and colours, and sustaining all the energies and capacities which He has put into His Creation, according to various laws which He has established.

5406 The act or acts of creation have various aspects, and the various words used in this connection are summarised in n. 120 to 2:117, as supplemented by n. 916 to 6:94 and n. 923 to 6:98. *Khalaqa* is the general term for creation, and the Author of all Creation is *Khaliq. B ara'a* implies a process of evolving from previously created matter or state: the Author of this process is *Bari ,* the Evolver. *Sawwara* implies giving definite form or colour, so as to make a thing exactly suited to a given end or object: hence the title *Musaxvwir,* Bestower of Forms or Colours: for this shows the completion of the visible stage of creation.

5407 *Cf.* 7:180. n. 1154; and 17:110, n. 2322.

5408 Thus the argument of the Surah is rounded off on the same note as was struck at the beginning, 59:1. The first verse and the last verse of the Surah are the same, except as regards the tense of the verb *sabbaha.* In the first verse it is the optative form of the preterite *sabbaha:* 'let everything declare the Glory of Allah'. After the illustrations given, the declaratory form of the aorist is appropriate, *yusabbihu:* "everything doth declare the Glory of Allah".

60. Al Mumtahinah (That Which Examines)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. O ye who believe! Take not my enemies and yours as friends (or protectors),- offering them(5409) (your) love, even though they have rejected the Truth that has come to you, and have (on the contrary) driven out the Prophet and yourselves (from your homes), (simply) because ye believe in Allah your Lord!(5410) If ye have come out to strive in My Way and to seek My Good Pleasure, (take them not as friends), holding secret converse of love (and friendship) with them: for I know full well all that ye conceal and all that ye reveal. And any of you that does this has strayed from the Straight Path.

5409 The immediate occasion for this was a secret letter sent by one Hatib, a *Muhajir,* from Madinah, to the Pagans at Makkah, in most friendly terms, seeking for their protection on behalf of his children and relatives left behind in Makkah. The letter was intercepted, and he confessed the truth. He was forgiven as he told the truth and his motive did not appear to be heinous, but this instruction was given for future guidance. This was shortly before the conquest of Makkah, but the principle is of universal application. You cannot be on terms of secret intimacy with the enemies of your Faith and people, who are persecuting your Faith and seeking to destroy your Faith and you. You may not do so even for the sake of your relatives as it compromises the life and existence of your whole community.

5410 Such was the position of the Muslim community in Madinah after the Hijrah and before the conquest of Makkah.

2. If they were to get(5411) the better of you, they would behave to you as enemies, and stretch forth their hands and their tongues against you for evil: and they desire that ye should reject the Truth.

5411 Besides the question of your fidelity to your own people, even your own selfish interests require you to beware of secret intrigues with the enemies. They will welcome you as cat's paws. But what will happen when they have used you and got the better of you and your people? Then they will show you their hand. And a heavy hand it will be! Not only will they injure you with their hands but with their tongues! The only words they will use for you will be "Traitors to their own"! If they intrigue with you now, it is to pervert you from the path of truth and righteousness and to win you over to their evil ways.

3. Of no profit to you(5412) will be your relatives and your children on the Day of Judgment: He will judge between you: for Allah sees well all that ye do.

5412 The plea of children and relatives (see n. 5409 above) will be no excuse for treachery when the Day of Judgement comes. Your children and family will not save you. The Judgement will be in the hands of Allah, and He has full knowledge of all your overt and hidden acts and motives.

4. There is for you an excellent example (to follow) in Abraham and those with him,(5413) when they said to their people: "We are clear of you and of whatever ye worship besides Allah. we have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity(5414) and hatred for ever,- unless ye believe in Allah and Him alone": But not when Abraham said to his father: "I will pray for forgiveness(5415) for thee, though I have no power (to get) aught on thy behalf from Allah." (They prayed): "Our Lord!(5416) in Thee do we trust, and to Thee do we turn in repentance: to Thee is (our) Final Goal.

5413 See 9:114. Abraham was tender-hearted, and loyal to his father and his people. He warned them against idolatry and sin, and prayed for his father, but when his father and his people became open enemies of Allah, Abraham entirely dissociated himself from them, and left his home, his father, his people, and his country. *Those with him* were his believing wife and nephew Lut and any other Believers that went into exile with him.

5414 The enemies of Allah are enemies of the righteous, and they hate the righteous. Therefore the righteous must cut themselves off eternally from them, unless they repent and come back to Allah. In that case they receive Allah's mercy and are entitled to all the rights of love and brotherhood. This shows that our detestation is for evil, not for men as such so long as there is a chance for repentance. See also verse 7 below. But we must give no chance to Evil for working evil on our Brotherhood at any time.

5415 Refer again to 9:114. n. 1365: and n. 5413 above. Abraham's conduct is not condemned: it was a special case, and is not to be imitated by weaker men, who may fall into sin by thinking too much of sinners.

5416 This prayer indicates what our attitude should be. We must trust to Allah, and not to Allah's enemies to protect and befriend ourselves, our families, or those near and dear to us.

5. "Our Lord! Make us not a (test and) trial(5417) for the Unbelievers, but forgive us, our Lord! for Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise."

5417 In n. 1198 to 8:25, 1 have explained the shades of meaning in the word *Fitnah.* In 2:102 Harut and Marut were a trial to test the righteous who trusted in Allah from the unrighteous who resorted to evil and superstition. Here the prayer to Allah is that we should be saved from becoming so weak as to tempt the Unbelievers to try to attack and destroy us.

6. There was indeed in them(5418) an excellent example for you to follow,- for those whose hope is in Allah and in the Last Day. But if any turn away, truly Allah is Free of all(5419) Wants, Worthy of all Praise.

5418 *In them: i.e.,* in their attitude of prayer and reliance on Allah, and of dissociation from evil.

5419 If anyone rejects Allah's Message or Law, the loss is his own. It is not Allah Who needs him or his worship or his sacrifice or his praise. Allah is independent of all wants, and His attributes are inherently deserving of all praise, whether the wicked give such praise or not, in word or deed.

7. It may be that Allah will grant love (and friendship)(5420) between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies. For Allah has power (over all things); And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

5420 Apparent religious hatred or enmity or persecution may be due to ignorance or over-zeal in a soul, which Allah will forgive and use eventually in His service, as happened in the case of 'Umar, who was a different man before and after his conversion. As stated in n. 5414 above, we should hate evil, but not men as such.

8. Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly(5421) with them: for Allah loveth those who are just.

5421 Even with Unbelievers, unless they are rampant and out to destroy us and our Faith, we should deal kindly and equitably, as is shown by our Prophet's own example.

9. Allah only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong.

10. O ye who believe! When there come to you believing women refugees,(5422) examine (and test) them: Allah knows best as to their Faith: if ye ascertain(5423) that they are Believers, then send them not back to the Unbelievers. They are not lawful (wives) for the Unbelievers, nor are the (Unbelievers) lawful (husbands) for them. But pay the Unbelievers what they have spent (on their dower), and there will be no blame on you if ye marry them(5424) on payment of their dower to them. But hold not to the guardianship of(5425) unbelieving women: ask for what ye have spent on their dowers, and let the (Unbelievers) ask for what they have spent (on the dowers of women who come over to you). Such is the command of Allah. He judges (with justice) between you. And Allah is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom.

5422 Under the treaty of Hudaybiyah [see Introduction to S. 48, paragraph 4, condition (3)], women under guardianship (including married women), who fled from Quraysh in Makkah to the Prophet's protection at Madinah were to be sent back. But before this Ayah was issued, Qurash had already broken the treaty, and some instruction was necessary as to what the Madinah Muslims should do in those circumstances. Muslim women married to Pagan husbands in Makkah were oppressed for their Faith, and some of them came to Madinah as refugees. After this, they were not to be returned to the custody of their Pagan husbands at Makkah, as the marriage of believing women with non-Muslims was held to be dissolved if the husbands did not accept Islam. But in order to give no suspicion to the Pagans that they were badly treated as *they* lost the dower they had given on marriage, that dower was to be repaid to the husbands. Thus helpless women refugees were to be protected at the cost of the Muslims.

5423 The condition was that they should be Muslim women. How were the Muslims to know? A non-Muslim woman, in order to escape from her lawful guardians in Makkah, might pretend that she was a Muslim. The true state of her mind and heart would be known to Allah alone. But if the Muslims, on an examination of the woman, found that she professed Islam, she was to have protection. The examination would be directed (among other things) to the points mentioned in verse 12 below.

5424 As the marriage was held to be dissolved (see n. 5422 above), there was no bar to the remarriage of the refugee Muslim woman with a Muslim man on the payment of the usual dower to her.

5425 Unbelieving women in a Muslim society would only be a clog and a handicap. There would be neither happiness for them, nor could they conduce in any way to the healthy life of the society in which they lived as aliens. They were to be sent away, as their marriage was held to be dissolved; and the dowers paid to them were to be demanded from the guardians to whom they were sent back, just as in the contrary scase the dowers of believing women were to be paid back to their Pagan ex-husbands (n. 5422 above).

11. And if any of your wives deserts you to the Unbelievers,(5426) and ye have an accession (by the coming over of a woman from the other side), then pay to those whose wives have deserted the equivalent of what they had spent (on their dower). And fear Allah, in Whom ye believe.

5426 A very unlikely contingency, considering how much better position the women occupied in Islam than under Pagan custom. But all contingencies have to be provided for equitably in legislation. If a woman went over to the Pagans, her dower would be recoverable from the Pagans and payable to the deserted husband. If a woman came over from the Pagans, her dower would be payable to the Pagans. Assuming that the two dowers were equal, the one would be set off against the other as between the two communities; but within the communities the deserted individual would be compensated by the individual who gains a wife. If the dowers were unequal, the balance would be recoverable as between the communities, and the adjustment would then be made as between the individuals. In practice the common Fund compensated the deserted husband in anticipation of any necessary adjustments.

12. O Prophet!(5427) When believing women come to thee to take the oath of fealty to thee, that they will not associate in worship any other thing whatever with Allah, that they will not steal, that they will not commit adultery (or fornication), that they will not kill their children, that they will not utter slander, intentionally forging Falsehood,(5427-A) and that they will not disobey thee in any just matter,- then do thou receive their fealty, and pray to Allah(5428) for the forgiveness (of their sins): for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

5427 Now come directions as to the points on which women entering Islam should pledge themselves. Similar points apply to men, but here the question is about women, and especially such as were likely, in those early days of Islam, to come from Pagan society into Muslim society in the conditions discussed in notes 5422 and 5423 above. A pledge on these points would search out their real motives; (1) to worship none but Allah; (2) not to steal; (3) not to indulge in sex outside the marriage tie; (4) not to commit infanticide; (the Pagan Arabs were prone to female infanticide); (5) not to indulge in slander or scandal; and (6) generally, to obey loyally the law and principles of Islam. The last was a comprehensive and sufficient phrase, but it was good to indicate also the special points to which attention was to be directed in those special circumstances. Obedience was, of course, to be in all things just and reasonable: Islam requires strict discipline but not slavishness. (R).

5427-A "That they will not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood": Literally, ". . . nor produce any lie that they have devised between their hands and feet". These words mean that they should not falsely attribute the paternity of their illegitimate children to their lawful husbands thereby adding to the monstrosity of their original sin of infidelity. [Eds.].

5428 If pledges are sincerely given for future conduct, admission to Islam is open. If there is anything in the past, for which there is evidence of sincere repentance, forgiveness is to be prayed for. Allah forgives in such cases: how can man refuse to give such cases a real chance?

13. O ye who believe! Turn not (for friendship) to people on whom is the Wrath of Allah,(5429) of the Hereafter they are already in despair, just as the Unbelievers are in despair about those (buried) in graves.(5430)

5429 So we come back to the theme with which we started in this Surah: that we should not turn for friendship and intimacy to those who break Allah's Law and are outlaws in Allah's Kingdom. The various phases of this question, and the legitimate qualifications, have already been mentioned, and the argument is here rounded off. *Cf.* also 58:14.

5430 The Unbelievers, who do not believe in a Future Life, can therefore have no hope beyond this life. Miserable indeed is this life to them; for the ills of this life are real to them, and they can have no hope of redress. But such is also the state of others-people of the Book or not-who wallow in sin and incur the divine Wrath. Even if they believe in a Future Life, it can only be to them a life of horror, punishment, and despair. For those of Faith the prospect is different. They may suffer in this life, but this life to them is only a fleeting shadow that will soon pass away. The Reality is beyond; there will be full redress in the Beyond, and Achievement and Felicity as they can scarcely conceive of in the terms of this life.

61. Al Saff (The Battle Array)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Whatever is(5431) in the heavens and on earth, let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah. for He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

5431 This verse is identical with 59:1. The latter illustrated the theme of the wonderful working of Allah's providence in defeating the wiles of His enemies. Here the same theme is illustrated by showing the need of unshaken discipline if we are to receive the help of Allah.

2. O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not?(5432)

5432 At Uhud there was some disobedience and therefore breach of discipline. People had talked much, but had failed to back up their resolution in words with firmness in action. See n. 442 to 3:121. But on all occasions when men's deeds are not commensurate with their words, their conduct is odious in the sight of Allah, and it is only due to Allah's Mercy if they are saved from disaster.

3. Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that ye say that which ye do not.

4. Truly Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if(5433) they were a solid cemented structure.

5433 A battle array, in which a large number of men stand, march, or hold together against assault as if they were a solid wall, is a striking example of order, discipline, cohesion, and courage. *A solid cemented structure* is even a better simile than the usual "solid wall" as the "structure" or building implies a more diversified organisation held together in unity and strength, each part contributing strength in its own way, and the whole held together not like a mass but like a living organism. *Cf.* also 37:1 and n. 4031.

5. And remember, Moses said(5434) to his people: "O my people! why do ye vex and insult me, though ye know that I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you?" Then when they went wrong,(5435) Allah let their hearts go wrong. For Allah guides not those who are rebellious transgressors.

5434 The people of Moses often rebelled against him, vexed his spirit, and insulted him. See 33:69. n. 3774, and (in the Old Testament) Num 12:1-15. They did it not through ignorance, but from a selfish, perverse, and rebellious spirit, for which they received punishment. The Ummah of Islam should remember and take note of it, and should avoid any deviation from the Law and Will of Allah.

5435 The sinner's own will deviates, *i.e.,* goes off from the right way, and he does wrong. That means that he shuts off Allah's grace, Allah then, after the sinner's repeated rebellion, withdraws the protecting Grace from him, and the sinner's heart is tainted: there is "a disease in his heart", which is the centre of his being: his spiritual state is ruined. Allah's guidance is withdrawn from him.

6. And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you,(5436) confirming(5437) the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad."(5438) But when he came to them with Clear Signs,(5439) they said, "this is evident sorcery!"

5436 The mission of Jesus was to his own people, the Jews. *Cf.* Matt. 10:5-6. See also Matt. 15:24: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of Israel ;" also Matt. 15:26: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs."

5437 *Cf.* Matt 5:17.

5438 "Ahmad", or "Muhammad", the Praised One, is almost a translation of the Greek word *Periclytos.* In the present Gospel of John, 14:16, 15:26, and 16:7, the word "Comforter" in the English version is for the Greek word "Paracletos", which means "Advocate", "one called to the help of another, a kind friend", rather than "Comforter". Our doctors contend that Paracletos is a corrupt reading for Periclytos, and that in their original saying of Jesus there was a prophecy of our Prophet *Ahmad* by name. Even if we read Paraclete, it would apply to the Prophet, who is "a Mercy for all creatures" (21:107) and "most kind and merciful to the Believers" (9:128). See also n. 416 to 3:81.

5439 Our Prophet was foretold in many ways; and when he came, he showed forth many Clear Signs, for his whole life from beginning to end was one vast miracle. He fought and won against odds. Without learning from men he taught the highest wisdom. He melted hearts that were hard, and he strengthened hearts that were tender and required support. In all his sayings and doings men of discernment could see the working of Allah's hand; yet the ignorant Unbelievers called it all Sorcery!-called that unreal which became the most solid fact of human history!

7. Who doth greater wrong than one who invents falsehood against Allah, even as he is being invited(5440) to Islam? And Allah guides not those who do wrong.

5440 It is wrong in any case to uphold falsehoods and debasing superstitions, but it is doubly wrong when these are put forward in rivalry or opposition to the light of eternal Unity and Harmony which is Islam. See C. 7-11. Allah sends His guidance freely, but withdraws His Grace from those who wilfully do wrong.

8. Their intention is to extinguish Allah.s Light (by blowing) with their mouths:(5441) But Allah will complete (the revelation of) His Light, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it).

5441 Allah's Light is unquenchable. A foolish, ignorant person who thinks of extinguishing it is like a rustic who wants to blow out electric light as he might blow out a rush candle! *With their mouths* also implies the babble and cackle of Ignorance against Allah's Truth. The more the foolish ones try to quench Allah's Light, the clearer it shines, to shame them!

9. It is He Who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, that he may proclaim it over all religion,(5442) even though the Pagans may detest (it).

5442 *Over all religion:,* in the singular: not over all other religions, in the plural. There is really only one true Religion, the Message of Allah, submission to the Will of Allah: this is called Islam. It was the religion preached by Moses and Jesus; it was the religion of Abraham, Noah, and all the prophets, by whatever name it may be called. If people corrupt that pure light, and call their religions by different names, we must bear with them, and we may allow the names for convenience. But Truth must prevail over all. See also 9:33, n. 1290, and 48:28, n. 4912.

10. O ye who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain(5443) that will save you from a grievous Penalty?-

5443 *Tijarah:* bargain, trade, traffic, transaction: something given or done, in return for something which we desire to get. What we give or do on our part is described in verse 11 below, and what we get is described in verse 12. It is truly a wonderful bargain: what we are asked to give is so little; what we are promised in return is so much. There comes Allah's unbounded Bounty and Munificence. *Cf.* also 9:111, where the bargain is stated in another way.

11. That ye believe in Allah and His Messenger, and that ye strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah, with your property and your persons: That will be best for you, if ye but knew!(5444)

5444 It would indeed be a great and wonderful bargain to give so little and get so much, if we only knew and understood the comparative value of things-die

sacrifice of our fleeting advantages for forgiveness, the love of Allah, and eternal bliss.

12. He will forgive you your sins, and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, and to beautiful mansions in Gardens of Eternity: that is indeed the Supreme Achievement.

13. And another (favour will He bestow,) which ye(5445) do love,- help from Allah and a speedy victory. So give the Glad Tidings to the Believers.

5445 The supreme Achievement has already been mentioned, *viz.:* the Gardens of Eternity in the Presence of Allah. But lest that seem too remote or abstract for the understanding of men not spiritually advanced, another type or symbol or metaphor is mentioned which the men who first heard this Message could at once understand and appreciate-"which ye do love": *viz.:* Help and Victory. For all striving in a righteous Cause we get Allah's help: and however much the odds against us may be, we are sure of victory with Allah's help. But all life is a striving or struggle-the spiritual life even more than any other; and the final victory there is the same as the Garden of Eternity .

14. O ye who believe! Be ye helpers of Allah:(5446) As said Jesus the son of Mary,(5447) to the Disciples, "Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah." Said the disciples, "We are Allah.s helpers!" then a portion of the Children of Israel believed, and a portion disbelieved: But We gave power to those who believed, against their enemies, and they became the ones that prevailed.(5448)

5446 If we seek Allah's help, we must first help Allah's Cause, *i.e.,* dedicate ourselves to Him entirely and without reserve. This was also the teaching of Jesus, as mentioned in this verse. As found in the New Testament, the metaphor used is that of the Cross. "Then said Jesus to his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24).

5447 See 3:52, and n. 392; and for the Biblical reference, see the last note. The names of the twelve Disciples will be found in Matt. 10:2-4.

5448 A portion of the Children of Israel -the one that really cared for the Truth-believed in Jesus and followed his guidance. But the greater portion of them were hard hearted, and remained in their beaten track of formalism and false racial pride. The majority *seemed* at first to have the upper hand when they thought they had crucified Jesus and killed his Message. But they were soon brought to their senses. Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in A.C. 70 and the Jews have been scattered ever since. "The Wandering Jew" has become a byword in many literatures. On the other hand, those who followed Jesus permeated the Roman Empire, brought many new races within their circle, and through the Roman Empire, Christianity became the predominant religion of the world until the advent of Islam. So is it promised to the people of Islam: they must prevail if they adhere to the Truth. Badr (A.H. 2) was a landmark against Pagan Arabia: Qadisiyah (A.H. 14) and Mada'in (A.H. 16) against the might of Persia: Yarmuk (A.H. 15) against the might of the Byzantine Empire in Christian Syria; and Heliopolis (A.H. 19) against the same Empire in Christian Egypt and Africa. These were symbols in external events. The moral and spiritual landmarks are less tangible, and more gradual, but none the less real. Mark how the arrogance and power of Priesthood have been quelled; how superstition and belief in blind Fate have been checked; how the freedom of human individuals has been reconciled with the sanctity of marriage in the Law of Divorce, how the civil position of women has been raised; how temperance and sobriety have been identified with religion; what impetus has been given to knowledge and experimental science; and how economic reconstruction has been pioneered by rational schemes for the expenditure and distribution of wealth.



62. Al Jumu'ah (Friday)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare(5449) the Praises and Glory of Allah,- the Sovereign,(5450) the Holy One, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

5449 See n. 5408 to 59:24, where I have explained the difference in signification between *sabbaha* and *yusabbihu.* The latter form is used here to express an actual fact. 'Everything declares the Praises and Glory of Allah, because Allah's mercies extend to all His creatures: He sends His Revelation for the benefit of the ignorant and unlettered as well as for those who have learning in their midst, especially as the latter are apt, by the very weight of their ponderous learning, to miss the real point and spirit of Allah's Message.'

5450 See 59:23, and n. 5402. Here we have two of the divine attributes repeated from 59:23 and two from the end of 59:24, implying a reminiscence of all the beautiful divine attributes mentioned in that passage.

2. It is He Who has sent amongst the Unlettered(5451) a messenger from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs,(5452) to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture(5453) and Wisdom,- although(5454) they had been, before, in manifest error;-

5451 *The Unlettered:* as applied to a people, it refers to the Arabs, in comparison with the People of the Book, who had a longer tradition of learning, but whose failure is referred to in verse 5 below. As applied to individuals, it means that Allah's Revelation is for the benefit of all men, whether they have worldly learning or not

5452 *His Signs:* Allah's wonderful Signs in His Creation and in His ordering of the world. It may include the Verses of the Qur'an, but they are more specifically referred to as "Scripture" in the next line but one.

5453 *Cf.* 2:129, and n. 129. Read again the attributes in the last verse. Allah is full Sovereign, and therefore cares for all His subjects, including the meanest and most ignorant, and sends His prophets or messengers to them. He is *the* Holy One, and therefore purifies and sanctifies those who were steeped in superstition and wickedness. He is Exalted in Power, and therefore He can confer all these blessings on the most unlikely people (verse 3), and no one can stay His hand. He is wise, and therefore He instructs in wisdom, both through written Scriptures, and in other ways, *e.g.,* by means of a knowledge of life and its laws, and an understanding of His wonderful universe.

5454 Previous ignorance or error is no bar to a person or nation receiving the blessings of Allah's revelation, provided such person or nation has the will to come to Allah and the capacity to bear His Message. For an instance of incapacity through arrogance, see verse 6 below. For some remarks on the Arabs as vehicles of the new Light, see. C. 12-15.

3. As well as (to confer all these benefits upon) others of them,(5455) who have not already joined them: And He is exalted in Might, Wise.

5455 *Others of them:* refers to other persons or peoples who may be ignorant, *i.e.,* other than those among whom the Prophet came as a messenger. In other words his Message is for his Arab people and his non-Arab contemporaries as well as those who live in other ages, and have no personal contact with him or his Companions.

4. Such is the Bounty of Allah, which He bestows on whom He will:(5456) and Allah is the Lord of the highest bounty.

5456 That is, according to His wise Will and Plan, and also as a result of His unbounded generosity to all.

5. The similitude of those who were charged with the (obligations of the) Mosaic Law, but who subsequently failed in those (obligations), is that of a donkey(5457) which carries huge tomes (but understands them not). Evil is the similitude of people who falsify the Signs of Allah. and Allah guides not people who do wrong.

5457 The Children of Israel were chosen as special vehicles for Allah's Message early in history. When their descendants corrupted the Message and became guilty of all abominations against which prophets like Isaiah inveighed with such zeal and fire, they merely became like beasts of burden that carry learning and wisdom on their backs but do not understand or profit by it.

6. Say: "O ye that stand on Judaism!(5458) If ye think that ye are friends to Allah, to the exclusion of (other) men, then express your desire for Death, if ye are truthful!"(5459)

5458 *Standing on Judaism* is a very different thing from following the Law and Will of Allah. An arrogant claim to be a chosen people, to be the exclusive possessors of divine teaching, to be exempt from any punishment for breaches of the divine law, *(Cf.* 2:88), is presumptuous blasphemy. It may be Judaism, but it is not in the spirit of Moses.

5459 *Cf.* 2:94-96. If they claimed to be special friends of Allah, why do they not eagerly desire death, which would bring them nearer to Allah? But of all people, they are the most tenacious of this life and the good things of this life! And they know that their grasping selfish lives have run up a score of sin against them, which will meet its recompense.

7. But never will they express their desire (for Death), because of the (deeds) their hands have sent on before them! and Allah knows well those that do wrong!

8. Say: "The Death from which ye flee will truly overtake you: then will ye be sent back to the Knower of things secret and open: and He will tell you (the truth(5460) of) the things that ye did!"

5460 Before Allah's Judgement Seat, when Judgement is established, we shall see the full inwardness of all deeds in this world. The veil of illusion and delusion will be torn off. All our secret motives will be laid bare. The results of all our little plots and plans and their reactions on our spiritual and eternal welfare will be clearly visible to us. All make-believe will disappear.

9. O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday(5461) (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and traffic):(5462) That is best for you if ye but knew!(5463)

5461 Friday, is primarily the Day of Assembly, the weekly meeting of the Congregation, when we show our unity by sharing in common public worship, preceded by a *Khutbah,* in which the Imam (or Leader) reviews the week's spiritual life of the Community and offers advice and exhortation on holy living. Notice the gradations of social contact for Muslims if they followed the wise ordinances of their Faith. (1) Each individual remembers Allah for himself or herself five or more times everyday in the home or place of business, or local mosque, or open air, as the case may be. (2) On Friday in every week there is a local meeting in the central mosque of each local centre-it may be a village, or town, or ward of a big city. (3) At the two Ids every year, there is a large local area meeting in one centre. (4) Once at least in a lifetime, where possible, a Muslim shares in the vast international assemblage of the world, in the centre of Islam, at the Makkan Pilgrimage. A happy combination of decentralisation and centralisation, of individual liberty and collective meeting, and contact at various stages or grades. The mechanical part of this ordinance is easy to carry out. Are we carrying out the more difficult part?-the spirit of unity, brotherhood, mutual consultation, and collective understanding and action? (R).

5462 The idea behind the Muslim weekly "Day of Assembly" is different from that behind the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) or the Christian Sunday. The Jewish Sabbath is primarily a commemoration of Allah's ending His work and resting on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2; Exod. 20:11): we are taught that Allah needs no rest, nor does He feel fatigue (2:255). The Jewish command forbids work on that day but says nothing about worship or prayer (Exod. 20:10); our ordinance lays chief stress on the remembrance of Allah. Jewish formalism went so far as to kill the spirit of the sabbath, and call forth the protest of Jesus: "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark, 2:27). But the Christian Church, although it has changed the day from Saturday to Sunday, has inherited the Jewish spirit: witness the Scottish Sabbath; except insofar as it has been secularised. Our teaching says: 'When the time for *J umu'ah* Prayer comes, close your business and answer the summons loyally and earnestly, meet earnesdy, pray, consult and learn by social contact: when the meeting is over, scatter and go about your business'.

5463 The immediate and temporal worldly gain may be the ultimate and spiritual loss, and *vice versa.*

10. And when the Prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of Allah. and celebrate the Praises of Allah often (and without stint): that ye may prosper.(5464)

5464 Prosperity is not to be measured by wealth or worldly gains. There is a higher prosperity the health of the mind and the spirit.

11. But when they see some bargain or some amusement, they disperse headlong to it, and leave thee standing. Say: "The (blessing) from the Presence of Allah is better than any amusement or bargain! and Allah is the Best to provide (for all needs)."(5465)

5465 Do not be distracted by the craze for amusement or gain. If you lead a righteous and sober life, Allah will provide for you in all senses, better than any provision you can possibly think of.

63. Al Munafiqun (The Hypocrites)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. When the Hypocrites(5466) come to thee, they say, "We bear witness that thou art indeed the Messenger of Allah." Yea, Allah knoweth that thou art indeed His Messenger, and Allah beareth witness that the Hypocrites are indeed liars.

5466 The hypocrite element, if one exists in any society, is a source of weakness and a danger to its health and its very existence. When the Prophet came to Madinah in *Hijrah,* his arrival was welcome to all the patriotic citizens: it not only united them in common life and healed their old differences, but it brought honour and light to them in the person of the greatest living Teacher of Truth. But there were some baser elements filled with envy. Such hopes as they had entertained of attaining power and leadership by playing on the animosities of the factions were now dashed to the ground. They now began to work underground. For fear of the majority they dared not oppose the new growing Brotherhood of Righteousness. They tried to undermine it by intriguing secretly with its enemies and swearing openly its loyalty to the Prophet. They were thoroughly unmasked and discredited at the battle of Uhud. See 3:167, and n. 476.

2. They have made their oaths(5467) a screen (for their misdeeds): thus they obstruct (men) from the Path of Allah. truly evil are their deeds.

5467 *Cf.* 58:16 and n. 5357. When they say that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, it is Allah's own truth: but what is in their hearts? Nothing but falsehood.

3. That is because they believed, then they rejected Faith: So a seal was set(5468) on their hearts: therefore they understand not.

5468 *Cf.* 2:7. Their double-dealing has fogged their understanding. In Arabic the heart is taken to be the seat of understanding as well as of affection.

4. When thou lookest at them, their exteriors(5469) please thee; and when they speak, thou listenest to their words. They are as (worthless as hollow) pieces of timber propped up,(5470) (unable to stand on their own). They think that every cry is against them.(5471) They are the enemies; so beware of them. The curse of Allah be on them! How are they deluded (away from the Truth)!

5469 The Hypocrites at all times are plausible people, and so were the Hypocrites of Madinah. They present a fine exterior; they dress well; they can usually afford fine equipages; they try to win the confidence of everyone, as they have no scruples in telling lies, and apparently expressing agreement with everyone. Their words are fair-spoken, and as truth does not check their tongues, their flattery and deception know no bounds. But all this is on the outside. As they have no sincerity, nothing that they say or do is worth anything.

5470 Good timber is strong in itself and can support roofs and buildings. Hollow timber is useless, and has to be propped up against other things. The Hypocrites are like rotten timber. They have no firm character themselves, and for others they are unsafe props to rely upon.

5471 Their conscience always troubles them. If any cry is raised, they immediately get alarmed, and think it is against themselves. Such men are worse than open enemies.

5. And when it is said to them, "Come, the Messenger of Allah will pray for your(5472) forgiveness", they turn aside their heads, and thou wouldst see them turning away their faces in arrogance.

5472 Even hypocrisy like other sins can be forgiven by repentance and amendment, provided there is a will and earnest desire to turn from evil and seek the Grace of Allah. In this case there was none.

6. It is equal to them whether thou pray for their forgiveness or not.(5473) Allah will not forgive them. Truly Allah guides not rebellious transgressors.

5473 The stiff-necked rejecters of Allah's Truth have made a wide gulf between themselves and Allah's Grace. No prayer for them will help them. In the attitude of rebellion and transgression they cannot obtain Allah's forgiveness.

7. They are the ones who say, "Spend nothing on those who are with Allah's Messenger,(5474) to the end that they may disperse (and quit Medina)." But to Allah belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth; but the Hypocrites understand not.

5474 The *Muhajirun,* who had come to be with the Prophet in Madinah in exile, were received, helped, entertained by the *Ansar* (Helpers). The Hypocrites in Madinah did not like this, and tried in underhand ways to dissuade the good folk of Madinah from doing all they could for the exiles. But their tricks did not succeed. The small Muslim community grew from strength to strength until they were able to stand on their own resources and greatly to augment the resources of their hosts as well. It is goodness that produces strength and prosperity, and Allah holds the keys of the treasures of man's well-being. It is not for Allah's enemies to dole out or withhold the unbounded treasures of Allah.

8. They say, "If we(5475) return to Medina, surely the more honourable (element) will expel therefrom the meaner." But honour belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to the Believers; but the Hypocrites know not.

5475 Words of this import were spoken by 'Abd Allah Ibn Ubayy, the leader of the Madinah Hypocrites to or about the Exiles, in the course of the expedition against the Banu Mustaliq in the fourth or fifth year of the Hijrah. He had hopes of leadership which were disappointed by the coming to Madinah of a man far greater than he. So he arrogated to himself and his clique the title of "the more honourable (element)" and slightingly spoke of the Emigrants as the "meaner" element that had intruded from outside.

9. O ye who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. If any act thus, the loss is their own.(5476)

5476 Riches and human resources of all kinds are but fleeting sources of enjoyment. They should not turn away the good man from his devotion to Allah. "Remembrance of Allah" includes every act of service and goodness, every kind thought and kind deed, for this is the service and sacrifice which Allah requires of us. If we fail in this, the loss is our own, not anyone else's: for it stunts our own spiritual growth.

10. and spend something (in charity) out of the substance(5477) which We have bestowed on you, before Death should come to any of you and he should say, "O my Lord! why didst Thou not give me respite for a little while? I should then have given (largely) in charity, and I should have been one of the doers of good".

5477 "Substance" or "Sustenance", in every sense, literal and metaphorical. Whatever good we enjoy comes from Allah, and it is our duty to use some of it in the service of others, for that is Charity and the service of Allah. Every unselfish act is Charity. And we must not postpone our good resolutions to the future. Death may come suddenly on us, and we cannot *then* be allowed to plead for more time. Every present moment calls urgently for its good deed.

11. But to no soul will Allah grant respite(5478) when the time appointed (for it) has come; and Allah is well acquainted with (all) that ye do.

5478 When our limited period of probation is over, we cannot justly ask for more time, nor will more time be given to us then. Procrastination is itself a fault, and Allah knows every hidden thought and motive in our minds

64. Al Taghabun (The Mutual Loss and Gain)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare(5479) the Praises and Glory of Allah. to Him belongs dominion, and to Him belongs praise: and He has power over all things.

5479 *Cf.* 62:1, and n. 5449. All things by their very existence proclaim the Glory and the Praises of Allah. He has dominion over all things, but He uses His dominion for just and praiseworthy ends. He has power over all things: therefore He can combine justice with mercy, and His Plan and Purpose cannot be frustrated by the existence of Evil along with Good in His Kingdom.

2. It is He Who has created you; and of you are some that are Unbelievers, and some(5480) that are Believers: and Allah sees well all that ye do.

5480 It is not that He does not see Rebellion and Evil, nor that He cannot punish them. He created all things pure and good, and if evil crept in by the grant of a limited free will by Him, it is not unforeseen; it is in His wise and universal Plan, for giving man a chance of rising higher and ever higher.

3. He has created the heavens and the earth in just proportions, and has given you shape,(5481) and made your shapes beautiful: and to Him is the final Goal.(5482)

5481 *Cf.* 40:64, and n. 4440: also 7:11 and n. 996. In addition to the beauty and grandeur of all God's Creation, He has endowed man with special aptitudes, faculties and capacities, and special excellencies which raise him at his best to the position of Allah's vicegerent on earth. "Beautiful" also includes the idea of "adapted to the ends for which they were created".

5482 *The final Goal:* not only of mankind, but of all things created, whether material or in the realm of ideas and events. All things return to Allah: as they derive their origin from Him, so is the return or destination of all of them to Allah.

4. He knows what is in the heavens and on earth; and He knows what(5483) ye conceal and what ye reveal: yea, Allah knows well the (secrets) of (all) hearts.

5483 Not only does He create and develop and sustain all things; but all thoughts, motives, feelings, ideas, and events are known to Him. Therefore we must not imagine that, if some evil seems to go unpunished, it is not known to Him or has escaped His notice. His Plan is wise and good in its fullest compass: sometimes we do not see its wisdom and goodness because we see only a broken fragment of it, as our own intelligence is narrow.

5. Has not the story reached you, of those who rejected Faith aforetime? So they tasted the evil result of their conduct;(5484) and they had a grievous Penalty.

5484 "The evil result of their conduct" begins to manifest itself in this very life, either in external events, or in internal restlessness and agonies of conscience. But its culminating force will be seen in the "grievous Penalty" of the Hereafter.

6. That was because there came to them messengers with Clear Signs, but they said: "Shall (mere) human beings(5485) direct us?" So they rejected (the Message) and turned away. But Allah can do without (them): and Allah is(5486) free of all needs, worthy of all praise.

5485 This is referred to in a more expanded form in 14:9-11.

5486 Their obedience is not necessary to Allah, nor will their rejection of Truth affect the validity of Truth or injure the progress of Truth. Allah is free of all needs or dependence on any circumstance whatever. He sends His Message for the good of mankind, and it is man who suffers by ignoring, rejecting, or opposing it.

7. The Unbelievers think that they will not be raised up (for Judgment).(5487) Say: "Yea, By my Lord, Ye shall surely be raised up: then shall ye be told (the truth) of all that ye did. And that is easy for Allah."

5487 In other words, they think that there is no future life, and no responsibility for our actions beyond what we see in the present life. If that were true, all the profits of fraud and roguery, which remain unpunished in this world—and many do remain unpunished in this world—will remain with the wicked; and all the losses and pain suffered by integrity and righteousness, if they find no compensation in this life, will never find any compensation. This would be an odd result in a world of justice. We are taught that this is not true—that it is certain that the balance will be redressed in a better future world; that there will be a resurrection of what we call the dead; and that on that occasion the full import of all we did will be made plain to us, and our moral and spiritual responsibility will be fully enforced.

8. Believe, therefore, in Allah and His Messenger, and in the Light which We(5488) have sent down. And Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.

5488 *The Light which We have sent down: i.e.,* the light of Revelation; the light of conscience, the light of reason, and every kind of true light by which we may know Allah and His Will. If we play false with any such lights, it is fully known to Allah.

9. The Day that He assembles you (all) for a Day of Assembly,- that will be a Day of mutual loss(5489) and gain (among you), and those who believe in Allah and work righteousness,- He will remove from them(5490) their ills, and He will admit them to Gardens beneath which(5491) Rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever: that will be the Supreme Achievement.

5489 The Day of Judgement will truly be "a Day of Mutual Loss and Gain", as the title of this Surah indicates. Men who thought they were laying up riches will find themselves paupers in the Kingdom of Heaven . Men who thought they were acquiring good by wrongdoing will find their efforts were wasted; 18:104. On the other hand the meek and lowly of this life will acquire greater dignity and honour in the next; the despised ones doing good here will be the accepted ones there; the persecuted righteous will be in eternal happiness. The two classes will as it were change their relative positions.

5490 *Remove from them their ills.* The ills may be sins, faults, mistakes, or evil tendencies; Allah will of His grace cover them up, and blot out the account against them; or they may be sorrows, sufferings, or disappointments: Allah may even change the evil of such persons into good, their apparent calamities into opportunities for spiritual advancement; 25:70. This is because of their sincere Faith as evidenced by their repentance and amendment.

5491 "Gardens" the symbol of the highest Bliss, see 2:25, n. 44; 13:35; 47:15. (R).

10. But those who reject Faith and treat Our Signs as falsehoods, they will be Companions of the Fire, to dwell therein for aye: and evil is that Goal.

11. No kind of calamity can occur, except by the leave of Allah. and if anyone believes(5492) in Allah, (Allah) guides his heart (aright): for Allah knows all things.

5492 What we consider calamities may be blessings in disguise. Pain in the body is often a signal of something wrong, which we can cure by remedial measures. So in the moral and spiritual world, we should in all circumstances hold firmly to the faith that nothing happens without Allah's knowledge and leave; and therefore there must be some justice and wisdom according to His great universal Plan. Our

duty is to find out our own shortcomings and remedy them. If we try to do so in all sincerity of heart, Allah will give us guidance.

12. So obey Allah, and obey His Messenger. but if ye turn back, the duty of Our Messenger is but to proclaim (the Message)(5493) clearly and openly.

5493 The Messenger comes to guide and teach, not to force and compel. The Messenger's teaching is clear and unambiguous, and it is open and free to all. *Cf.* also 5:92.

13. Allah. There is no god but He: and on Allah, therefore, let the Believers put their trust.

14. O ye who believe! Truly, among your wives and your children are (some that are) enemies to(5494) yourselves: so beware of them! But if ye forgive and overlook,(5495) and cover up (their faults), verily Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

5494 In some cases the demand of families, *i.e.,* wife and children may conflict with a man's moral and spiritual convictions and duties. In such cases he must guard against the abandonment of his convictions, duties, and ideals to their requests or desires. But he must not treat them harshly. He must make reasonable provision for them, and if they persist in opposing his clear duties and convictions, he must forgive them and not expose them to shame or ridicule, while at the same time holding on to his clear duty. Such cases occurred when godly men undertook exile from their native city of Makkah to follow the Faith in Madinah. In some cases their families murmured, but all came right in the end.

5495 For the different words for "forgiveness" see n. 110 to 2:109.

15. Your riches and your children may be but a trial:(5496) but in the Presence of Allah, is the highest, Reward.

5496 Children may be a *trial in* many senses: (1) their different ways of looking at things may cause you to reflect, and to turn to the highest things of eternal importance; (2) their relationship with you and with each other may confront you with problems far more complicated than those in separate individual lives, and thus become a test of your own strength of character and sense of responsibility; (3) their conflict with your ideals (see n. 5494 above) may vex your spirit, but may at the same time search out your fidelity to Allah; and (4) their affection for you and your affection for them, may be a source of strength for you if it is pure, just as it may be a danger if it is based on selfish or unworthy motives. So also riches and worldly goods have their advantages as well as dangers.

16. So fear Allah(5497) as much as ye can; listen and obey and spend in charity for the benefit of your own souls.(5498) And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls,- they are the ones that achieve prosperity.(5499)

5497 *Fear Allah* combined with *as much as you can* obviously means: "lead lives of self-restraint and righteousness": the usual meaning of *Taqwa:* see n. 26 to 2:2.

5498 Charity is meant to help and do good to other people who need it. But it has the highest subjective value for the person who gives it. Like mercy "it blesseth him that gives and him that takes". It purifies the giver's soul: the affection that he pours out is for his own spiritual benefit and progress. *Cf.* Coleridge: "He prayeth best who loveth all things both great and small, for the Great God Who loveth us, Who made and loveth all".

5499 *Cf.* 59:9. Our worst enemy is within ourselves-the grasping selfishness which would deprive others of their just rights or seize things which do not properly belong to it. If we can get over this covetous selfishness, we achieve real Prosperity in justice and truth.

17. If ye loan to Allah,(5500) a beautiful loan, He will double it to your (credit), and He will grant you Forgiveness: for Allah is most Ready to appreciate (service),(5501) Most Forbearing,-

5500 *Cf.* 2:245 and n. 276. Our Charity or Love is called a loan to Allah, which not only increases our credit account manifold, but obtains for us the forgiveness of our sins, and the capacity for increased service in the future.

5501 *Cf.* 14:5, n. 1877; and 35:30, n. 3917. Allah's appreciation of our service or our love goes far deeper than its intrinsic merits or its specific expression on our side. His reward is beyond our deserts, and passes over our defects. He judges by our motives, which He can read through and through; see next verse.

18. Knower of what is open, Exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom.(5502)

5502 Allah's Appreciation and Forbearing Kindness can reach so far beyond our merits, because (1) His universal knowledge comprehends hidden motives, which others cannot see in us; (2) His power is so great that He can afford to reward even the unworthy; and (3) His Wisdom is so great that He can turn even our weakness into our strength.



65. Al Talaq (Divorce)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. O Prophet!(5503) When ye do divorce women,(5504) divorce them at their prescribed periods,(5505) and count (accurately), their prescribed periods: And fear Allah your Lord:(5506) and turn them not out of their houses, nor shall they (themselves) leave,(5507) except in case they are guilty of some open lewdness, those are limits set by Allah. and any who transgresses the limits of Allah, does verily wrong his (own) soul: thou knowest not if perchance Allah will bring about thereafter some new situation.(5508)

5503 Note that in the first instance the Prophet is himself addressed individually, as the Teacher and representative of the Community. Then the actual directions: "when ye . . .": are addressed to the Community collectively.

5504 "Of all things permitted by law, Divorce is the most hateful in the sight of Allah": see Introduction to this Surah. The general directions and limitations of Divorce may be studied in 2:228-232, 236-237, 241, and notes; also 4:35.

5505 *'Iddah,* as a technical term in divorce law, is explained in n. 254 to 2:228. Its general meaning is "a prescribed period": in that general sense it is used in 2:185 for a prescribed period of fasting.

5506 The prescribed period (see last note) is in the interests of the wife, of the husband, of an unborn child (if there is any), and of sex laws in nature, and therefore the elementary dictates of refined human society. In English Law the six months interval between the decree *nisi* and the decree absolute in divorce attains the same purpose in a round-about way. The Commentators suggest that the divorce should not be pronounced during the courses. Read with 2:222, this

implies that any incipient differences between husband and wife should not be forced to an issue at a time when sex is least attractive and almost repulsive. Everything should be done to strengthen the social and spiritual aspects of marriage and keep down stray impulses of animal instinct. The parties are to think seriously in a mood of piety, keeping the fear of Allah in their minds.

5507 As Islam treats the married woman as a full juristic personality in every sense of the term, a married woman has a right, in the married state, to a house or apartment of her own. And a house or apartment implies the reasonable expenses for its upkeep and for her own and her children's maintenance. And this is obligatory not only in the married state, but during the ' *iddah,* which is necessarily a most trying period for the woman. During this period she must not only not be turned out, but it is not decent for her to leave of her own accord, lest the chances of reconciliation should be diminished: see the next note.

5508 A reconciliation is possible, and is indeed recommended at every stage. The first serious differences between the parties are to be submitted to a family council on which both sides are represented (4:35); divorce is not to be pronounced when mutual physical attraction is at an ebb (n. 5506); when it is pronounced, there should be a period of probationary waiting; dower has to be paid and due provision has to be made for many things on equitable terms; every facility has to be given for reconciliation till the last moment, and impediments are provided against hasty impulse leading to rupture. *Thou knowest not if perchance Allah will bring about thereafter some new situation.*

2. Thus when they fulfil their term appointed, either take them back on equitable terms(5509) or part with them on equitable terms; and take for witness two persons from among you, endued with justice, and establish the evidence(5510) (As) before Allah. Such is the admonition given to him who believes in Allah and the Last Day. And for those who fear Allah, He (ever) prepares(5511) a way out,

5509 *Cf.* 2:231. Everything should be done fairly and squarely, and all interests should be safeguarded.

5510 Publicity and the establishment of proper evidence ensure that no one will act unjustly or selfishly. All should remember that these are matters of serious import, affecting our most intimate lives, and therefore our position in the spiritual kingdom.

5511 In these very delicate and difficult matters, the wisdom of jurists provides a less satisfactory solution than a sincere desire to be just and true, which is described as the "fear of Allah". Where such a desire exists, Allah often provides a solution in the most unexpected ways or from the most unexpected quarters; *e.g.,* the worst enemies may be reconciled, or the cry or the smile of an infant baby may heal seemingly irreparable injuries or unite hearts seemingly alienated forever. And Faith is followed at once by a psychological feeling of rest for the troubled spirit.

3. And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine. And if any one puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him. For Allah will surely accomplish his purpose:(5512) verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion.

5512 Our anger and our impatience have to be curbed. Our friends and our mates or associates may seem to us ever so weak and unreasonable, and the circumstances may be ever so disheartening; yet we must trust in Allah. How can we measure our own weakness or perhaps blindness? He knows all. His universal Purpose is always good. His Will must be accomplished, and we should wish for its accomplishment. His ordering of the universe observes a due, just, and perfect proportion.

4. Such of your women as have passed the age of monthly courses, for them the prescribed period, if ye have any doubts, is three months, and for those who have no courses (it is the same):(5513) for those who carry (life within their wombs), their period is until they deliver their burdens: and for those who fear Allah, He will make their path easy.(5514)

5513 *Cf.* 2:228. For normal women, the *'iddah* is the three monthly courses after separation: if there are no courses or if the courses are in doubt, it is three calendar months. By that time it will be clear whether there is pregnancy: if there is, the waiting period is still after delivery (see also 2:234).

5514 *Cf.* n. 5511 above. If there is a true and sincere desire to obey the Will of Allah and do right the difficulties will vanish, and these delicate matters will be settled for the greatest happiness of all.

5. That is the Command of Allah, which He has sent down to you: and if any one fears Allah, He will remove his ills,(5515) from him, and will enlarge his reward.

5515 Allah's ordinance is nothing arbitrary. It is to help us, and to lead us on to our highest good, temporal and spiritual. If we obey Allah, His wisdom will not only solve our difficulties, but it will remove other ills that we may have, subjective and objective. Like a good shepherd, He will lead us on to more and more luscious pastures. With each step higher, our position becomes more and more sure and our reward more and more precious.

6. Let the women live (in ´iddat) in the same style as ye live, according to your means: Annoy them not, so as to restrict them.(5516) And if they carry (life in their wombs), then(5517) spend (your substance) on them until they deliver their burden: and if they suckle your (offspring), give them their recompense: and take mutual counsel together, according to what is just and reasonable. And if ye find yourselves(5518) in difficulties, let another woman suckle (the child) on the (father´s) behalf.(5519)

5516 *Cf.* n. 5507 above. A selfish man, because he has divorced his wife, may, in the probationary period before the divorce becomes absolute, treat her with contumely, and while giving her residence and maintenance, may so restrict it as to make her life miserable. This is forbidden. She must be provided on the same scale as he is, according to his status in life. There is still hope of reconciliation, and if not, yet the parting must be honourable.

5517 If there is a pregnancy, a sacred third life comes on the scene, for which there is added responsibility (perhaps added hope for reconciliation) for both parents. In any case no separation is possible until after the child is born. Even after birth, if no reconciliation between parents is possible, yet for the nursing of the child and for its welfare the care of the mother remains the duty of the father, and mere must be mutual counsel between him and the mother in all truth and sincerity.

5518 *If ye find yourselves in difficulties: e.g.,* if the mother's milk fails, or if her health fails, or if any circumstance arises which bars the natural course of the mother nursing her own child. There may be psychological difficulties also.

5519 That is, the father must stand all expenses, without cutting down the reasonable allowance to which the mother is en tided.

7. Let the man of means spend according to his means: and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty, Allah will soon grant relief.(5520)

5520 We must trust in Allah, and do whatever is possible for us in the interests of the young life for which we are responsible. We must not be frightened by difficulties. Allah will give us relief and provide a solution if we act with honest integrity. *Cf.* 94:5-6.

8. How many populations that insolently opposed(5521) the Command of their Lord and of His messengers, did We not then call to account,- to severe account?- and We imposed on them an exemplary Punishment.(5522)

5521 Insolent impiety consists not only in the breach of the rites of religion. Even more vital is the defiance of the laws of nature which Allah has made for us. These laws, for us human beings include those which relate to our fellow-beings in society to whom kindness and consideration form the basis of our social duties. Our duties to our families and our children in intimate matters such as were spoken of in the last Section, are as important as any in our spiritual life. Peoples who forgot the moral law in marriage or family life perished in this world and will have no future in the Hereafter. The lessons apply not only to individuals but to whole nations or social groups.

5522 This refers to the present life: apparently the Hereafter is implied in verse 10 below.

9. Then did they taste the evil result of their conduct, and the End of their conduct was Perdition.

10. Allah has prepared for them a severe Punishment(5523) (in the Hereafter). Therefore fear Allah, O ye men of understanding - who have believed!- for Allah hath indeed sent down to you a Message,-(5524)

5523 See last note.

5524 There is no excuse for us to go astray, seeing that Allah in His infinite Mercy has explained to us His Message by His many Signs around us and clearly by means of the human Teachers and Messengers whom He has sent for our instruction: see next verse.

11. An Messenger, who rehearses to you the Signs of Allah containing clear explanations, that he may lead forth those who believe and do righteous deeds from the depths of Darkness(5525) into Light. And those who believe in Allah and work righteousness, He will admit to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever: Allah has indeed granted for them a most excellent Provision.

5525 *Cf.* 24:40: the unbelievers' state is "like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by dark clouds; depths of darkness, one above another." *Cf.* 2:257: "Allah is the Protector of those who have Faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light."

12. Allah is He Who created seven Firmaments(5526) and of the earth a similar number.(5527) Through the midst of them (all) descends(5528) His Command: that ye may know that Allah has power over all things, and that Allah comprehends, all things in (His) Knowledge.

5526 "Seven Firmaments." *(Cf.* 2:29, 17:44, 23:17, 23:86, 51:12, 65:12, 67:3, and 71:15.) [Eds.].

5527 As there are grades one above the other in the spiritual kingdom, there are similar grades in our life on this earth. If we take the literal meaning-just as we see the heavenly spheres one above another, over our heads, so we can see that the crust of the earth is built up of geological strata one above another (*Cf.* n. 5559). (R).

5528 But in all spheres of life and Creation, whatever conception we are able to form of them, it is certain that the Command or Law of Allah runs through them all, for His knowledge and power extend through all things.



66. Al Tahrim (Prohibition)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. O Prophet! Why holdest thou to be forbidden that which Allah has(5529) made lawful to thee? Thou seekest to please(5530) thy consorts. But Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

5529 The Prophet's household was not like other households. The Consorts of Purity were expected to hold a higher standard in behaviour and reticence than ordinary women, as they had higher work to perform. See n. 3706 to 33:28. But they were human beings after all, and were subject to the weaknesses of their sex, and they sometimes failed. The behavior of 'A'ishah once caused serious difficulties: the Prophet's mind was sore distressed, and he renounced the society of his wives for some time. This renunciation seems to be referred to here. The situation was none the less difficult for him because she was a daughter of Abu Bakr, one of the truest and most intimate of his Companions and lieutenants. The commentators usually cite the following incident in connection with the revelation of these verses. It is narrated from 'A'i sh ah, the wife of the Prophet (peace be on him) by al Bukhari, Muslim, al Nasa'i. Abu Dawud and others that the Prophet usually visited his wives daily after 'Asr Prayer. Once it so happened that he stayed longer than usual at the quarters of Zaynab bint Jahsh, for she had received from somewhere some honey which the Prophet liked very much. "At this", says 'A'ishah, "I felt jealous, and I, Hafsah, Sawdah and Safiyah agreed among ourselves that when he visits us each of us would tell him that a peculiar odour came from his mouth as a result of what he had eaten, for we knew that he was particularly sensitive to offensive smells". So when wives hinted at it, he vowed that he would never again use honey. Thereupon these verses were revealed reminding him that he should not declare to himself unlawful that which Allah had made lawful to him. The important point to bear in mind is that he was at once rectified by revelation, which reinforces the fact that the prophets are always under divine protection, and even the slightest lapse on their part is never left uncorrected. (R).

5530 The tender words of admonition addressed to the Consorts in 33:28-34 explain the situation far better than any comments can express. If the Prophet had been a mere husband in the ordinary sense of the term, he could not have held the balance even between his private feelings and his public duties. But he was not an ordinary husband, and he abandoned his renunciation on his realisation of the higher duties with which he was charged, and which required conciliation with firmness.

2. Allah has (already) precribed(5531) for you, (O Muslims), Method for absolution from your oaths: and Allah is your protector, and He is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom.

5531 *Cf.* 2:224. If your vows prevent you from doing good, or acting rightly, or making peace between persons, you should expiate the vow, but not refrain from your good deed.

3. When the Prophet disclosed a matter in confidence(5532) to one of his consorts, and she then divulged it (to another), and Allah made it known to him, he Confronted(5533) her with part thereof and held back a part. Then when he told her thereof, she said, "Who told thee this? "He said, "He told me Who knows and is well-acquainted (With all things)."

5532 Who these two consorts were, and what was the matter in confidence which was disclosed, we are not expressly told, but the facts mentioned in n. 5529 above will help us to understand this passage. The sacred words imply that the matter was of great importance to the principle involved, but that the details were not of sufficient importance for permanent record. For the lessons to be drawn, see the notes following.

5533 The moral we have to draw is manifold. (1) If anything is told to us in confidence, especially by one at the head of affairs, we must not divulge it to our closest friend. (2) If such divulgence is made in the most secret whispers, Allah's Plan is such that it will come to light and expose those guilty of breach of confidence. (3) When the whispered version is compared with the true version and the actual facts, it will be found that the whispered version is in great part untrue, due to the misunderstanding and exaggeration inevitable in the

circumstances. (4) The breach of confidence must inevitably redound to the shame of the guilty party, whose surprise only covers a sense of humiliation. See next note.

4. If ye two turn in repentance(5534) to Him, your hearts are indeed so inclined; But if ye back up each other against him, truly Allah is his Protector, and Gabriel, and (every) righteous one among those who believe,- and furthermore,(5535) the angels - will back (him) up.

5534 There are further lessons. (5) Both the party betraying confidence and that encouraging the betrayal must purge their conduct by repentance. (6) Frank repentance would be what their hearts and conscience themselves would dictate and they must not resist such amends on account of selfish obstinacy. (7) If they were to resist frank repentance and amends, they are only abetting each other's wrong, and they cannot prevail against all the spiritual forces which will be ranged on the side of the right.

5535 Do not forget the dual meaning: immediate, in application to the Prophet, and general, being the lesson which we ought all to learn. The Prophet could not be injured by any persons doing anything against him even though they might unconsciously put him in greater jeopardy: for Allah, the Angel Gabriel, (who was the Messenger to hirn), and the whole Community, would protect him,-to say nothing of the army of angels or hidden spiritual forces that always guarded him. *Cf.* 33:56. The general lesson for us is that the good man's protection is that of the spiritual forces around him; it is divine protection, against which human weakness or folly will have no power.

5. It may be, if he divorced you (all),(5536) that Allah will give him in exchange Consorts better than you,- who submit (their wills), who believe, who are devout, who turn to Allah in repentance, who worship (in humility), who are given to fasting(5537) previously married or virgins.

5536 From the case of two in verse 4, we now come to the case of all the Consorts generally, in verse 5. *Cf.* 33:28-30. Their duties and responsibilities were higher than those of other women, and therefore their failure would also be more serious. This is only hypothetical, in order to show us the virtues expected of diem: faith and devotion, worship and service, readiness for travel or *hijrah,* whether they were young or old, new to married life or otherwise. From them again the more general application follows-to all women in Islam.

5537 *Sa'ihat* literally, those who travel about for the Faith, renouncing hearth and home: hence those who go on pilgrimage, who fast, who deny themselves the ordinary pleasures of life. Note that the spiritual virtues are named, in the descending order: submitting their wills (Islam), faith and devotion, turning ever to worship and faith, and performing other rites, or perhaps being content with asceticism. And this applies to all women, maiden girls or women of mature experience who were widows or separated from previous husbands by divorce.

6. O ye who believe!(5538) save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men(5539) and Stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe,(5540) who flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded.

5538 Note how we have been gradually led up in admonition from two Consorts to all consorts, to all women, to all Believers, and to all men and women including Unbelievers. We must carefully guard not only our own conduct, but the conduct of our families, and of all who are near and dear to us. For the issues are most serious, and the consequences of a fall are most terrible.

5539 *A Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones. Cf.* 2:24. This is a terrible Fire: not merely like the physical fire which burns wood or charcoal or substances like that, and consumes them. This spiritual Fire will have for its fuel men who do wrong and are as hardhearted as stones, or stone Idols as symbolical of all the unbending Falsehoods in life.

5540 *Cf.* 74:31. We think of angelic nature as gentle and beautiful, but in another aspect perfection includes justice, fidelity, discipline, and the firm execution of duty according to lawful Commands. So, in the attributes of Allah Himself, Justice and Mercy, Kindness and Correction are not contradictory but complementary. An earthly ruler will be unkind to his loyal subjects if he does not punish evildoers.

7. (They will say), "O ye Unbelievers! Make no excuses this Day! Ye are being(5541) but requited for all that ye did!"

5541 'This is no hardship or injustice imposed on you. It is all but the fruit of your own deeds; the result of your own deliberate choice.'

8. O ye who believe!(5542) Turn to Allah with sincere repentance: In the hope that your Lord will remove(5543) from you your ills and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow,- the Day that Allah will not permit to be humiliated the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their Light will run(5544) forward before them and by their right hands, while they say, "Our Lord! Perfect our Light for us, and grant us Forgiveness: for Thou hast power over all things."

5542 The opposition of sex against sex, individual or concerted, having been condemned, we are now exhorted to turn to the Light, and to realise that the good and righteous can retain their integrity even though their own mates, in spite of their example and precept, remain in evil and sin.

5543 Whatever may have been the faults of the past, unite in good deeds, and abandon petty sectional jealousies, and Allah will remove your difficulties and distresses, and all the evils from which you suffer. Indeed He will grant you the Bliss of Heaven and save you from any humiliation which you may have brought on yourselves by your conduct and on the revered Prophet and Teacher whose name you professed to take.

5544 See 57:12, and n. 5288. The darkness of evil will be dispelled, and the Light of Allah will be realised by them more and more. But even so they will not be content: for they will pray for the least taint of evil to be removed from them, and perfection to be granted to them. In that exalted state they will be within reach of perfection-not by their own merits, but by the infinite Mercy and Power of Allah.

9. O Prophet! Strive hard(5545) against the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell,- an evil refuge (indeed).

5545 See 9:73, where the same words introduce the argument against the Hypocrites. Here they introduce the argument against wickedness, which, though given the privilege of association with goodness and piety, persisted in wicked deeds, and in favour of those noble souls, which, though tied to wickedness, retained their purity and integrity. Two examples of each kind are given-of women, as this Surah is mainly concerned with women.

10. Allah sets forth, for an example to the Unbelievers, the wife of Noah(5546) and the wife of Lut:(5547) they were (respectively) under two of our righteous servants, but they were false to their (husbands),(5548) and they profited nothing before Allah on their account, but were told: "Enter ye the Fire along with (others) that enter!"

5546 Read Noah's story in 11:36-48. Evidently his contemporary world had got so corrupt that it needed a great Flood to purge it. "None of the people will believe except those who have believed already. So grieve no longer over their evil deeds." But there were evil ones in his own family. A foolish and undutiful son is mentioned in 11:42-46. Poor Noah tried to save him and pray for him as one "of his family"; but the answer came: "he is not of thy family; for his conduct is unrighteous". We might expect such a son to have a mother like him, and here we are told that it was so. Noah's wife was also false to the standards of her husband, and perished in this world and the Hereafter.

5547 The wife of Lut has already been mentioned more than once. See 11:81, and n. 1577; 7:83, and n. 1051; etc. The world around her was wicked and she sympathised with and followed that wicked world, rather than her righteous husband. She suffered the fate of her wicked world.

5548 *False to their husbands:* not necessarily in sex, but in the vital spiritual matters of truth and conduct. They had the high privilege of the most intimate relationship with the noblest spirits of their age: but if they failed to rise to the height of their dignity, their relationship did not save them. They could not plead that they were the wives of pious husbands. They had to enter Hell like any other wicked women. There is personal responsibility before Allah. One soul cannot claim the merits of another, any more than one pure soul can be injured by association with a corrupt soul. The pure one should keep its purity intact. See the next two examples.

11. And Allah sets forth, as an example to those who believe the wife of Pharaoh:(5549) Behold she said: "O my Lord! Build for me, in nearness(5550) to Thee, a mansion in the Garden, and save me from Pharaoh and his doings, and save me from those that do wrong";

5549 Traditionally, she is known as 'Asiyah, one of the four perfect women, the other three being Mary the mother, of Jesus. Khadijah the wife of the Prophet, and Fatimah his daughter. Pharaoh is the type of arrogance, godlessness, and wickedness. For his wife to have preserved her Faith, her humility, and her righteousness was indeed a great spiritual triumph. She was probably the same who saved the life of the infant Moses: 28:9.

5550 Her spiritual vision was directed to Allah, rather than to the worldly grandeur of Pharaoh's court. It. is probable that her prayer implies a desire for martyrdom, and it may be that she attained her crown of martyrdom.

12. And Mary the daughter(5551) of ´Imran, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into (her body)(5552) of Our spirit; and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of His Revelations, and was one of the devout (Servants).(5553)

5551 'Imran was traditionally the name of the father of Mary the mother of Jesus: see n. 375 to 3:35. She was herself one of the purest of women, though the Jews accused her falsely of unchastity: *Cf.* 19:27-28.

5552 *Cf.* 21:91. As a virgin she gave birth to Jesus: 19:16-29. In 32:9, it is said of Adam's progeny, man, that Allah "fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit". In 15:29, similar words are used with reference to Adam. The virgin birth should not therefore be supposed to imply that Allah was the father of Jesus in the sense in which Greek mythology makes Zeus the father of Apollo by Latona or of Minos by Europa. And yet that is the doctrine to which the Christian idea of "the only begotten Son of God" leads.

5553 Mary had true faith and testified her faith in the Prophet Jesus and in his revelation as well as in the revelations which he came to confirm (and to foreshadow). She was of the company of the Devout of all ages. The fact that *Qanitin* (devout) is not here in the feminine gender implies that the highest spiritual dignity is independent of sex. And so we close the lesson of this Surah, that while sex is a fact of our physical existence, the sexes should act in harmony and cooperation for in the highest spiritual matters we are all one. "We made her and her son a Sign for all peoples. Verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me and no other" (21:91-92).



67. Al Mulk (The Dominion)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Blessed(5554) be He in Whose hands is Dominion;(5555) and He over all things hath Power;-

5554 What do we mean when we bless the name of Allah, or proclaim (in the optative mood) that the whole Creation should bless the name of the Lord? We mean that we recognise and proclaim His beneficence to us; for all increase and happiness is through Him, "in His hands"—in the hands of Him Who also holds Dominion or Power. In our human affairs we sometimes see the separation of Dominion or Power from Goodness or Beneficence: in the divine nature we recognise that there is no separadon or antithesis.

5555 *Mulk:* Dominion, Lordship, Sovereignty, the Right to carry out His Will, or to do all that He wills. *Power* (in the clause following) is the Capacity to carry out His Will, so that nothing can resist or neutralise it. Here is beneficence completely identified with Lordship and Power; and it is exemplified in the verses following. Note that *Mulk* here has a different shade of meaning from *Malakut* in 36:83. Both words are from the same root, and I have translated both by the word "Dominion". But *Malakut* refers to Lordship in the invisible World, while *Mulk* to Lordship in the visible World. Allah is Lord of both.

2. He Who created Death(5556) and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed:(5557) and He is the Exalted(5558) in Might, Oft-Forgiving;-

5556 *Created Death and Life.* Death is here put before Life, and it is created. Death is therefore not merely a negative state. In 2:28 we read "Seeing that ye were without life (literally, *dead),* and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return." In 53:44, again, Death is put before Life. Death then is: (1) the state before life began, which may be non-existence or existence in some other form; (2) the state in which Life as we know it ceases, but existence does not cease; a state of *Barzakh* (23:100), or Barrier or Partition, after our visible Death and before Judgement; after that will be the new Life, which we conceive of under the term Eternity.

5557 Creation, therefore, is not in mere sport, or without a purpose with reference to man. The state before our present Life, or the state after, we can scarcely understand. But our present Life is clearly given to enable us to strive by good deeds to reach a nobler state.

5558 All this is possible, because Allah is so Exalted in Might that He can perfectly carry out His Will and Purpose, and that Purpose is Love, Mercy, and Goodness to His creatures.

3. He Who created the seven heavens(5559) one above another: No want of proportion wilt thou see in the Creation of ((Allah)) Most Gracious. So turn thy vision again: seest thou any flaw?

5559 *Cf.* 65:12, and n. 5526-5527. The heavens as they appear to our sight seem to be arranged in layers one above another, and ancient astronomy accounted for the motions of the heavenly bodies in an elaborate scheme of spheres. What we are concerned with here is the order and beauty of the vast spaces and the marvellous bodies that follow regular laws of motion in those enormous spaces in the visible world. From these we are to form some conception of the vastly greater Invisible World, for which we want special spiritual vision.

4. Again turn thy vision(5560) a second time: (thy) vision will come back to thee dull and discomfited, in a state worn out.

5560 Reverting to the symbolism of the external or visible world, we are asked to observe and study it again and again, and as minutely as our powers will allow. However closely we observe it, we shall find no flaw in it. Indeed the region of enquiry is so vast and stretches so far beyond our ken, that our eyes, aided with the most powerful telescopes, will confess themselves defeated in trying to penetrate to the ultimate mysteries. We shall find no defect in Allah's handiwork: it is our own powers that we shall find fail to go beyond a certain compass.

5. And we have, (from of old), adorned the lowest heaven(5561) with Lamps, and We have made such (Lamps) (as) missiles to drive(5562) away the Evil Ones, and have prepared for them the Penalty of the Blazing Fire.

5561 *Lowest* (or, *nearest) heaven:* see 37:6.

5562 The phenomenon of the shooting stars has been explained in 15:16-18, notes 1951-54; and in 37. 6-10 and notes thereon. (R).

6. For those who reject their Lord (and Cherisher)(5563) is the Penalty of Hell: and evil is (such), Destination.

5563 We have seen how the fire in the stars can suggest the beauty and order of the external world; and yet, when it meets with resistance and disharmony, it can burn and destroy. So in the moral and spiritual world. What can be a greater sign of evil, disharmony, and rebellion than to reject the Cherisher and Sustainer, on Whom our life depends, and from Whom we receive nothing but goodness? The Punishment, then, is Fire in its fiercest intensity, as typified in the next two verses.

7. When they are cast therein, they will hear the (terrible) drawing in(5564) of its breath even as it blazes forth,

5564 For *skahiq see* n. 1607 to 11:106. There *shahiq* (sobs) was contrasted with *zafir* (sighs): in the one case it is the drawing in of breath, and in the other the emission of a deep breath. Here the latter process is represented by the verb f ara, to swell, to blaze forth, to gush forth. In 11:40, the verb *fara* was applied to the gushing forth of the waters of the Flood: here the verb is applied to the blazing forth of the Fire of Punishment. Fire is personified: in its intake it has a fierce appetite: in the flames which it throws out, it has a fierce aggressiveness. And yet in ultimate result evil meets the same fate, whether typified by water or fire.

8. Almost bursting with fury: Every time a Group is cast therein, its Keepers(5565) will ask, "Did no Warner come to you?"

5565 *Cf.* 39:71, n. 4348. *Every time:* it may not be the same angels who are guarding the gates of Hell every time new inmates come in. The pure, innocent angel nature does not know the crookedness of human evil, and is surprised at so many human beings coming in for punishment: it wonders if no warning was conveyed to men, whereas in fact men have a warning in Clear Signs during all the period of their probation. The Clear Signs come from Revelation, from their own conscience, and from all nature around them.

9. They will say: "Yes indeed; a Warner did come to us, but we rejected him and said, ´(Allah) never sent down any (Message): ye are nothing but an egregious delusion!´"(5566)

5566 Allah's Signs were not only rejected or defied, but their very existence was denied. Nay, more, even their possibility was denied, and alas! righteous people and spiritual Teachers were persecuted or mocked (36:30). They were called fools or madmen, or men under a delusion!

10. They will further say: "Had we but listened or used our intelligence,(5567) we should not (now) be among the Companions of the Blazing Fire!"

5567 Man has himself the power given to him to distinguish good from evil, and he is further helped by the teachings of the great Messengers or World Teachers. Where such Teachers do not come into personal contact with an individual or a generation, the true meaning of their teaching can be understood by means of the Reason which Allah has given to every human soul to judge by. It is failure to follow a man's own lights sincerely that leads to his degradation and destruction.

11. They will then confess(5568) their sins: but far will be (Forgiveness) from the Companions of the Blazing Fire!

5568 They will then have passed through the fire of Judgement and will now be in the fire of Punishment. The Reality will not only now be clear to them, but after the questionings of the angels they cannot even pretend to make any excuses. They will freely confess, but that is not repentance, for repentance implies amendment, and the time for repentance and amendment will have long been past.

12. As for those who fear their Lord unseen,(5569) for them is Forgiveness and a great Reward.

5569 See n. 3902 to 35:18. Read "unseen" adverbially. To fear the Lord is to love Him so intensely that you fear to do anything which is against His Will, and you do it because you realise Him intensely in your hearts, though you do not see Him with your bodily senses. Nor is it of any consequence whether other people see your love or the consequences that flow from your love, for your good deeds are for the love of Allah and not for show in the eyes of men. Such intensity of love obtains forgiveness for any past, and is indeed rewarded with Allah's love, which is immeasurably precious beyond any merits you may possess.

13. And whether ye hide your word or publish it, He certainly has (full) knowledge, of the secrets of (all) hearts.

14. Should He not know,- He that created?(5570) and He is the One that understands the finest mysteries (and) is well-acquainted (with them).

5570 He Who creates must necessarily know His own handiwork. But lest we should measure His knowledge by such imperfect knowledge as we possess. His knowledge is further characterised as understanding the finest mysteries and being well-acquainted with them *(Latif and Khabir):* see 22:63, n. 2844.

15. It is He Who has made the earth manageable(5571) for you, so traverse ye through its tracts and enjoy of the Sustenance which He furnishes: but unto Him is the Resurrection.(5572)

5571 *Dhalul is* used in 2:71 for an animal trained and tractable; here it is used to qualify the earth, and I have translated 'manageable'. Man has managed to make paths through deserts and over mountains; through rivers and seas by means of ships; through the air by means of airways; he has made bridges and tunnels and other means of communication. But this he has only been able to do because Allah has given him the necessary intelligence and has made the earth tractable to that intelligence.

5572 In describing Allah's gifts and mercies and watchful care in this our temporary sojourn on this earth, it is made clear that the ultimate end is the Hereafter. The real Beyond, which is the goal, is the life after the Resurrection.

16. Do ye feel secure that He Who is in heaven will not cause you to be swallowed up(5573) by the earth when it shakes (as in an earthquake)?

5573 *Cf.* 17:68 and n. 2263. Also *Cf.* the story of Qarun in 28:76-82. If we feel safe on land, it is because Allah has made this earth amenable, manageable and serviceable to us (verse 15 above). But if we defy Allah and break His Law, have we any security, that even this comparatively unimportant safety in a fleeting world will last? Looking at it from a purely physical point of view, have there not been dreadful earthquakes, typhoons, and tornadoes?

17. Or do ye feel secure that He Who is in Heaven will not send against you a violent tornado(5574) (with showers of stones), so that ye shall know how (terrible) was My warning?

5574 *Cf.* 17:68; and 29:40, n. 3462. Such a violent wind destroyed the wicked Cities which defied Lut's warning.

18. But indeed men before them rejected (My warning): then how (terrible) was My rejection (of them)?(5575)

5575 *Cf.* 22:42-44, and n. 2822.

19. Do they not observe the birds above them,(5576) spreading their wings and folding them in?(5577) None can uphold them except (Allah) Most Gracious: Truly (Allah) Most Gracious: Truly it is He that watches over all things.

5576 The flight of birds is one of the most beautiful and wonderful things in nature. The make and arrangement of their feathers and bones, and their streamlined shapes, from beak to tail, are instances of purposive adaptation. They soar with outstretched wings; they dart about with folded wings; their motions upwards and downwards, as well as their stabilisation in the air, and when they rest on their feet, have given many ideas to man in the science and art of aeronautics. But who taught or gave to birds this wonderful adaptation? None but Allah, Whose infinite Mercy provides for every creature just those conditions which are best adapted for its life.

5577 In the Arabic, there is an artistic touch which it is not possible to reproduce in the translation. *Saffat* (spreading their wings) is in the form of the active participle, suggesting the continuous soaring on outspread wings; while *yaqbidna* (folding them in) is in the Aorist form, suggesting the spasmodic flapping of wings.

20. Nay, who is there that can help you, (even as) an army,(5578) besides (Allah) Most Merciful? In nothing but delusion are the Unbelievers.

5578 Not the greatest army that man can muster is of any use against the Wrath of Allah: while the constant watchful care of Allah is all-in-all to us, and we can never do without it. If the godless wander about in search for blessings otherwise than in the Mercy and Grace of Allah, they are wandering in vain delusions.

21. Or who is there that can provide you(5579) with Sustenance if He were to withhold His provision? Nay, they obstinately persist in insolent impiety and flight (from the Truth).

5579 "Sustenance" here, as elsewhere, *(e.g.,* in 16:73, n. 2105), refers to all that is necessary to sustain and develop life in all its phases, spiritual and mental, as well as physical. Allah Most Gracious is the Source of all our Sustenance, and if we persist in looking to Vanities for our Sustenance, we are pursuing a mirage, and, if we examine the matter, we are only following obstinate impulses of rebellion and impiety.

22. Is then one who walks headlong, with his face(5580) grovelling, better guided,- or one who walks(5581) evenly on a Straight Way?

5580 *Cf.* 27:90, and n. 3320. The man of probity is the man who walks evenly on a Straight Way , his feet guided by Allah's Light and his heart sustained by Allah's Mercy. The man who chooses evil grovels, with his face down, in paths of Darkness, stumbling on the way, and in constant distrust and fear, the fear of Evil. The two kinds of men are poles apart, although they live on the same earth, see the same Signs, and are fed with the same Mercies from Allah.

5581 Like Abraham trying to guide his unbelieving father: *Cf.* 19:43.

23. Say: "It is He Who(5582) has created you (and made(5583) you grow), and made for you the faculties of hearing, seeing, feeling and understanding: little thanks it is ye give.

5582 The Teacher is asked to draw constant attention to Allah, the source of all growth and development, the Giver of the faculties by which we can judge and attain to higher and higher spiritual dignity. And yet, such is our self-will, we use our faculties for wrong purposes and thus show our ingratitude to Allah.

5583 For *ansha' see n.* 923 to 6:98.

24. Say: "It is He Who has multiplied you through the earth,(5584) and to Him shall ye be gathered together."

5584 Mankind, from one set of parents, has been multiplied and scattered through the earth. Men have not only multiplied in numbers, but they have developed different languages and characteristics, inner and outer. But they will all be gathered together at the End of Things, when the mischief created by the wrong exercise of man's will will be cancelled, and the Truth of Allah will reign universally.

25. They ask: When will this promise be (fulfilled)? - If ye are telling(5585) the truth.

5585 The Unbelievers are sceptical, but they are answered in the next two verses.

26. Say: "As to the knowledge of the time, it is with Allah alone:(5586) I am (sent) only to warn plainly in public."

5586 The Judgement is certain to come. But when it will exactly come, is known to Allah alone. The Prophet's duty is to proclaim that fact openly and clearly. It is not for him to punish or to hasten the punishment of evil. *Cf.* 22:47-49.

27. At length, when they see it close at hand,(5587) grieved will be the faces of the Unbelievers, and it will be said (to them): "This is (the promise fulfilled),(5588) which ye were calling for!"

5587 "It", i.e., the fulfilment of the promise, the Day of Judgement. When it is actually in sight, then the Unbelievers realise that those whom they used to laugh at for their Faith were in the right, and that they themselves, the sceptics, were terribly in the wrong.

5588 They had defiantly asked for it. Now that it has come near, and it is too late for repentance, there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth".

28. Say: "See ye?- If Allah were to destroy me, and those with me,(5589) or if He bestows His Mercy on us,- yet who can deliver the Unbelievers from a grievous Penalty?"

5589 The sceptics might say and do say to the righteous: "Ah well! if calamities come, they involve the good with the bad, just as you say that Allah showers His mercies on both good and evil!" The answer is: "Don't you worry about us: even supposing we are destroyed, with all who believe with us, is that any consolation to you? Your sins must bring on you suffering, and nothing can ward it off. If we get any sorrows or sufferings, we take them as a mere trial to make us better, for we believe in Allah's goodness and we put our trust in Him." See next verse.

29. Say: "He is ((Allah)) Most Gracious: We have believed in Him, and on Him have we put our trust: So, soon will ye know(5590) which (of us) it is that is in manifest error."

5590 See the end of the last note. "Our Faith tells us that Allah will deliver us from all harm if we sincerely repent and lead righteous lives. You, Unbelievers, have no such hope. When the real adjustment of values is established, you will soon see whether we were in the wrong or you!"

30. Say: "See ye?- If your stream be some morning lost(5591) (in the underground earth), who then can supply you with clear-flowing water?"

5591 The Surah is closed with a parable, taken from a vital fact of our physical life, and leading up to the understanding of our spiritual life. In our daily life, what would happen if we woke up some fine morning to find that the sources and springs of our water supply had disappeared and gone down into the hollows of the earth? Nothing could save our life. Without water we cannot live, and water cannot rise above its level, but always seeks a lower level. So in spiritual life. Its sources and springs are in the divine wisdom that flows from on high. Allah is the real source of that life, as He is of all forms of life. We must seek His Grace and Mercy. We cannot find grace or mercy or blessing from anything lower. His Wisdom and Mercy are like fresh clear-flowing spring water, not like the muddy murky wisdom and goodness of this lower world which is only relative, and which often hampers life rather than advances it.

68. Al Qalam (The Pen)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Nun.(5592-A) By the Pen(5593) and the (Record) which (men) write,-

5592-A See note above.

5593 5593

2. Thou art not, by the Grace of thy Lord, mad or possessed.(5594)

5594 People usually call anyone mad whose standards are different from their own. And madness is believed by superstitious people to be due to demoniacal possession, an idea distinctly in the minds of the New Testament writers: for Luke speaks of a man from whom the "devils" were cast out, as being then "clothed, and in his right mind." (Luke, 8:35). (R).

3. Nay, verily for thee is a Reward unfailing:(5595)

5595 Instead of being out of his right mind, the Prophet of Allah had been raised to a great spiritual dignity, a reward that was not like an earthly reward that passes away, but one that was in the very core of his being, and would never fail him in any circumstances. He was really granted a nature and character far above the shafts of grief or suffering, slander or persecution.

4. And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character.

5. Soon wilt thou see,(5596) and they will see,

5596 Though Al Mustafa's nature raised him above the petty spite of his contemporaries, an appeal is made to their reason and to the logic of events. Was it not his accusers that were really mad? What happened to Al Walid ibn Al Mughayrah, or Abu jahl, or Abu Lahab?-and to Allah's Messenger and those who followed his guidance? The world's history gives the answer. And the appeal is not only to his contemporaries, but for all time.

6. Which of you is afflicted with madness.

7. Verily it is thy Lord that knoweth best, which (among men) hath strayed from His Path: and He knoweth best(5597) those who receive (true) Guidance.

5597 Men set up false standards of judgement. The right standard is that of Allah. For His Knowledge is complete and all-embracing; He reads hidden motives as well as things that appear before men's sight; and He knows the past history in which the roots of present actions are embedded, as well as the future consequences of present actions.

8. So hearken not to those who deny (the Truth).(5598)

5598 The enemies of Allah's truth are sometimes self-deceived. But quite often they have a glimmering of the truth in spite of their desire to shut their eyes. Then they compromise, and they would like the preachers of inconvenient truths to compromise with them. On those terms there would be mutual laudation. This easy path of making the best of both worlds is a real danger or temptation to the best of us, and we must be on our guard against it if we would really enter into the company of the Righteous who submit their wills to the Will of Allah. Abu Jahl freely offered impossible compromises to the Prophet.

9. Their desire is that thou shouldst be pliant: so would they be pliant.

10. Heed not the type of despicable men,-(5599) ready with oaths,(5600)

5599 The type of each of these hateful qualities is not uncommon, though the combination of all in one man makes him peculiarly despicable, as was Al WalTd ibn Al Mughiyrah, who was a ringleader in calumniating our Prophet and who came to an evil end not long after the battle of Badr, in which he received injuries.

5600 It is only liars who swear on all occasions, small or great, because their ordinary word is not believed in. The true man's word, according to the proverb, is as good as his bond.

11. A slanderer, going about with calumnies,

12. (Habitually) hindering (all) good, transgressing beyond bounds, deep in sin,

13. Violent (and cruel),-(5601) with all that, base-born,-

5601 Besides the self-deceiver and the easy-going man, there is a third type, even more degraded. He has no idea of truth or sincerity. He is ready to swear friendship with everyone and fidelity to every cause. But at the same moment he will slander and backbite, and cause mischief even between good but credulous persons. Evil seems to be his good, and good his evil. He will not only pursue evil courses himself but prevent other people from doing right. When checked, he resorts to violence. In any case, he will intrude where he has no right, claiming relationship or power or consideration in circles which would gladly disown him. He is vain of his wealth or because he has a large following at his beck and call. Religion is to him merely old-fashioned superstition.

14. Because(5602) he possesses wealth and (numerous) sons.

5602 *Because may* connect with *heed not in* verse 10, or with *violent and cruel* in verse 13. In the former case, we construe: 'Pay no attention to despicable men of the character described, simply because they happen to have wealth or influence, or much backing in manpower'. In the latter case, we construe: the fellow is violent and cruel, because he is puffed up with his wealth or riches or backing in manpower'. In the eyes of Allah such a man is in any case branded and marked out as a sinner.

15. When to him are rehearsed Our Signs,(5603) "Tales of the ancients",(5604) he cries!

5603 Allah's Signs, by which He calls us, are everywhere—in nature and in our very heart and soul. In Revelation, every verse is a Sign, for it stands symbolically for far more than it says. "Sign" *(Ayah)* thus becomes a technical term for a verse of the Qur'an.

5604 *Cf. 6:25.*

16. Soon shall We brand (the beast) on the snout!(5605)

5605 Literally, proboscis, the most sensitive limb of the elephant. The sinner makes himself a beast and can only be controlled by his snout.

17. Verily We have tried them as We tried the People of the Garden,(5606) when they resolved to gather the fruits of the (garden) in the morning.

5606 "Why do the wicked flourish?" is a question asked in all ages. The answer is not simple. It must refer to (1) the choice left to man's will, (2) his moral responsibility, (3) the need of his tuning his will to Allah's Will, (4) the long-suffering quality of Allah, which allows the widest possible chance for the operation of (5) His Mercy, and (6) in the last resort, to the nature of spiritual Punishment, which is not a merely abrupt or arbitrary act, but a long, gradual process, in which there is room for repentance at every stage. All these points are illustrated in the remarkable Parable of the People of the Garden, which also illustrates the greed, selfishness, and heedlessness of man, as well as his tendency to throw the blame on others if he can but think of a scapegoat. All these foibles are shown, but the Mercy of Allah is boundless, and even after the worst sins and punishments, there may be hope of an even better orchard than the one lost, if only the repentance is true, and there is complete surrender to Allah's Will. But if, in spite of all this, there is no surrender of the will, then, indeed, the punishment in the Hereafter is something incomparably greater than the little calamities in the Parable.

18. But made no reservation, ("If it be Allah.s Will").(5607)

5607 We must always remember, in all our plans, that they depend for their success on how far they accord with Allah's Will and Plan. His universal Will is supreme over all affairs. These foolish men had a secret plan to defraud the poor of their just rights, but they were put into a position where they could not do so. In trying to frustrate others, they were themselves frustrated.

19. Then there came on the (garden) a visitation from thy Lord,(5608) (which swept away) all around, while they were asleep.

5608 It was a terrible storm that blew down and destroyed the fruits and the trees. The whole place was changed out of all recognition.

20. So the (garden) became, by the morning, like a dark and desolate spot, (whose fruit had been gathered).

21. As the morning broke, they called out, one to another,-

22. "Go ye to your tilth (betimes) in the morning,(5609) if ye would gather the fruits."

5609 Awakening from sleep, they were not aware mat the garden had been destroyed by the storm overnight. They were in their own selfish dreams: by going very early, they thought they could cheat the poor of their share. See next note.

23. So they departed, conversing in secret low tones, (saying)-

24. "Let not a single indigent(5610) person break in upon you into the (garden) this day."

5610 The poor man has a right in the harvest—whether as a gleaner or as an artisan or a menial in an Eastern village. The rich owners of the orchard in the Parable wanted to steal a march at an early hour and defeat this right, but their greed was punished, so that it led to a greater loss to themselves. They wanted to cheat but had not the courage to face those they cheated, and by being in the field before anyone was up they wanted to make it appear to the world that they were unconscious of any rights they were trampling on.

25. And they opened the morning, strong in an (unjust) resolve.

26. But when they saw the (garden), they said: "We have surely lost our way:(5611)

5611 Their fond dreams were dispelled when they found that the garden had been changed out of all recognition. It was as if they had come to some place other then their own smiling garden. Where they had expected to reap a rich harvest, there was only a howling wilderness. They reflected. Their first thought was of their own personal loss, the loss of their labour and the loss of their capital. They had plotted to keep out others from the fruits: now, as it happened, the loss was their own.

27. "Indeed we are shut out (of the fruits of our labour)!"(5612)

5612 *Cf.* 56:67. Also see last note.

28. Said one of them, more just (than the rest):(5613) "Did I not say to you, ´Why not glorify ((Allah))?´"

5613 This was not necessarily a righteous man, but there are degrees in guilt. He had warned them, but he had joined in their unjust design.

29. They said: "Glory to our Lord! Verily we have been doing wrong!"

30. Then they turned, one against another, in reproach.(5614)

5614 When greed or injustice is punished people are ready to throw the blame on others. In this case, one particular individual may have seen the moral guilt of defying the Will of Allah and the right of man, but if he shared in the enterprise in the hope of profit, he could not get out of all responsibility.

31. They said: "Alas for us! We have indeed transgressed!

32. "It may be that our Lord will give us in exchange a better (garden) than this: for we do turn to Him (in repentance)!"(5615)

5615 If the repentance was true, there was hope. For Allah often turns a great evil to our good. If not true, they only added hypocrisy to their other sins.

The Parable presupposes that the garden came into the possession of selfish men, who were so puffed up with their good fortune that they forgot Allah. That meant that they also became harsh to their fellow-creatures. In their arrogance they plotted to get up early and defeat the claims of the poor at harvest time. They found their garden destroyed by a storm. Some reproached others, but those who sincerely repented obtained mercy. The "better garden" may have been the same garden, flourishing in a future season under Allah's gift of abundance.

33. Such is the Punishment (in this life); but greater is the Punishment(5616) in the Hereafter,- if only they knew!

5616 Even in this life the punishment for heedless or selfish arrogance and sin comes suddenly when we least expect it. But there is always room for Allah's Mercy if we sincerely repent. If the Punishment in this life seems to us so stupefying, how much worse will it be in the Hereafter, when the Punishment will not be only for a limited time, and the time for repentance will have passed?

34. Verily, for the Righteous, are Gardens of Delight,(5617) in the Presence of their Lord.

5617 All symbols of delight, expressed in terms of sense, are spiritualized by their being referred to the presence of Allah. The Garden is a joy, but the joy of this spiritual Garden is the sense of nearness to Allah. (R).

35. Shall We then treat the People of Faith like the People of Sin?(5618)

5618 The spiritual arrogance which rejects faith in Allah is perhaps the worst Sin, because it makes itself impervious to the Mercy of Allah, as a bed of clay is impervious to the absorption of water. It sets up its own standards and its own will, but how can it measure or bind the Will of Allah? It sets up its own fetishes—idols, priests, gods, or godlings. The fetishes may be even God-given gifts or faculties. Intellect or Science, if pushed up to the position of idols. If they are made rivals to Allah, question them: Will they solve Allah's mysteries, or even the mysteries of Life and Soul?

36. What is the matter with you? How judge ye?

37. Or have ye a book through which ye learn-

38. That ye shall have, through it whatever ye choose?(5619)

5619 It is clearly against both logic and justice that men of righteousness should have the same End as men of sin. Even in this life, man cannot command whatever he chooses, though he is allowed a limited freedom of choice. How can he expect such a thing under a reign of perfect Justice and Truth?

39. Or have ye Covenants with Us to oath,(5620) reaching to the Day of Judgment, (providing) that ye shall have whatever ye shall demand?

5620 Nor can the Pagans plead that they have any special Covenants with Allah which give them a favoured position above other mortals. The "Chosen Race" idea of the Jews is also condemned. It is quite true that a certain race or group, on account of special aptitude may be chosen by Allah to uphold His truth and preach it. But this is conditional on their following Allah's Law. As soon as they become arrogant and selfish, they lose that position. They cannot have a perpetual and unconditional lease till the Day of Judgement.

40. Ask thou of them, which of them will stand surety for that!

41. Or have they some "Partners" (in Godhead)?(5621) Then let them produce their "partners", if they are truthful!

5621 *"Partners" in Godhead:* as in the doctrine of the Trinity, or indeed in any form of polytheism. Such a doctrine destroys the cardinal doctrine of the Unity of Allah.

42. The Day that the shank(5622) shall be laid bare, and they shall be summoned to prostrate in adoration, but they shall not be able,-

5622 *The Day that the Shin shall be laid bare,* that is, when men are confronted with the stark reality of the Day of Judgement. On that occasion men will be summoned to adoration, not necessarily in words, but by the logic of facts, when the Reality will be fully manifest: the Glory will be too dazzling for the Unbelievers, whose past deliberate refusal, when they had freedom to choose, and yet rejected, will stand in their way. (R).

43. Their eyes will be(5623) cast down,- ignominy will cover them; seeing that they had been summoned aforetime to prostate in adoration, while they were in good shape,(5624) (and had refused).

5623 Their past memories, combined with their present position, will then fill them with a sense of the deepest dismay and humiliation. See last note.

5624 *Salimun:* whole, in full possession of the power of judgement and will; not constrained, as they now will be, by the Punishment staring them full in the face.

44. Then leave Me(5625) alone with such as reject this Message: by degrees shall We punish them from directions they perceive not.(5626)

5625 Notice the transition between "Me" and "We" in this verse, and again to "I" and "My" in the next verse. The first person plural ordinarily used in the Holy Qur'an as Allah's Word, is the plural of respect. In Royal decrees the first person plural is similarly used. When the first person singular is used, it marks some special personal relation, either of Mercy or favours (as in 2:38 or 2:150) or of punishment, as here. *(Cf.* n. 56 to 2:38).

5626 *Cf.* 7:182. We must not be impatient if we see the wicked flourish. It may be that the very appearance of flourishing here may be a part of the Punishment There may be an eventual punishment by a sort of Cataclysm; but evolutionary punishment is gradual and sure. Allah may punish wicked people by granting them respite and providing them worldly benefits in abundance, which encourages them in sin and transgression. So when they are finally seized by the Wrath of Allah they are caught suddenly and utterly unprepared, as it were, red-handed while engrossed in disbelief, a life of impiety and open revolt against their Lord! (R).

45. A (long) respite will I grant them: truly powerful is My Plan.

46. Or is it that thou dost ask them for a reward,(5627) so that they are burdened with a load of debt?-

5627 *Cf.* 52:40 n. 5074. It costs the Unbelievers nothing to hear the Preacher, for the Preacher asks for no reward, and indeed suffers for their benefit. The Preacher need not look even for appreciation or conversions. Al Mustafa is addressed in the first instance, but there is always a universal interpretation. The righteous man asks for no reward for his preaching or example: if he did, the value would be too great for the world to pay for. The Unbelievers behave as if they had the secret of the Unseen, but they are empty triflers, for, if they only tried to formulate spiritual laws, they would fail.

47. Or that the Unseen(5628) is in their hands, so that they can write it down?

5628 *Cf.* 52:41, n. 5075. The Unseen is certainly not within their knowledge or control. If it were, they could clearly write it down for their own guidance or the guidance of others. They should listen to the words of inspiration, sent by the Knower of all things.

48. So wait with patience for the Command of thy Lord, and be not like the Companion(5629) of the Fish,- when he cried out in agony.

5629 This was *Dhu al Nun,* or Jonah, for whom see n. 2744 to 21:87-88. *Cf.* also 37:139-148 and the notes there. Jonah was asked to preach to the people of Nineveh , a wicked city. He met with hostility and persecution, fled from his enemies, and took a boat. He was caught in a storm and thrown into the sea. He was swallowed by a fish or whale, but he repented in his living prison, and was forgiven. But the people of Nineveh were also forgiven, for they, too, repented. Here is a double allegory of Allah's mercy and forgiveness, and a command to patience, and complete and joyful submission to the Will of Allah.

49. Had not Grace from his Lord reached him, he would indeed have been cast off on the naked(5630) shore, in disgrace.

5630 *Cf.* 37:145-146, and n. 4126.

50. Thus did his Lord(5631) choose him and make him of the Company of the Righteous.(5632)

5631 Jonah was chosen by Allah's Grace and Mercy to be Allah's Prophet to Nineveh . If in his human frailty he lost a little patience, he suffered his punishment, but his true and sincere repentance and recognition of Allah's goodness and mercy restored him from his physical and mental distress, and from the obscuration of the spiritual Light in him.

5632 *Cf.* 4:69, n. 586. In the beautiful Fellowship of the Righteous there is room for all, of every grade of spiritual advancement, from the highest to the most ordinary. But, as in democratic politics every citizen's rights and status have complete recognition, so, in the spiritual Fellowship, *the* badge of Righteousness is the bond, even though there may be higher degrees of knowledge or experience.

51. And the Unbelievers would almost trip thee up(5633) with their eyes when they hear the Message; and they say: "Surely he is possessed!"

5633 The eyes of evil men look at a good man as if they would "eat him up", or trip him up or disturb him from his position of stability or firmness. They use all sorts of terms of abuse-"madman" or "one possessed by an evil spirit", and so on. *Cf.* 68:2 above, and n. 5594. But the good man is unmoved, and takes his even course. The Message of Allah is true and will endure, and it is a Message to all Creation.

52. But it is nothing less than a Message(5634) to all the worlds.

5634 This is the extreme antithesis to madness or demoniacal possession. So far from the Prophet uttering words disjointed or likely to harm people, he was bringing the Message of true Reality, which was to be cure of all evil, in every kind of world. For the different kinds of worlds see n. 20 to 1:2.

69. Al Haqqah (The Sure Reality)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. The Sure Reality!(5635)

5635 *Al Kaqqah;* the sure Truth: the Event that must inevitably come to pass; the state in which all falsehood and pretence will vanish, and the absolute Truth will be laid bare. The question in the three verses raise an air of mystery. The solution is suggested in what happened to Thamud and 'Ad, and other people of antiquity, who disregarded the Truth of Allah and came to violent end, even in this life-symbolically suggesting the great Cataclysm of the Hereafter, the Day of Doom.

2. What is the Sure Reality?

3. And what will make thee realise what the Sure Reality is?

4. The Thamud(5636) and the ´Ad People (branded) as false the Stunning Calamity!(5637)

5636 For these two peoples of antiquity, see n. 1043 to 7:73, and n. 1040 to 7:65.

5637 Another description of the terrible Day of Judgement. This word *Qari'ah also* occurs as the title of S. 101.

5. But the Thamud,- they were destroyed by a terrible Storm(5638) of thunder and lightning!

5638 Thamud were addicted to class arrogance. They oppressed the poor. The prophet Salih preached to them, and put forward a wonderful she-camel as symbol of the rights of the poor, but they hamstrung her. See n. 1044 to 7:73. They were destroyed in a mighty calamity, an earthquake accompanying a terrible thunderstorm.

6. And the ´Ad-(5639) they were destroyed by a furious Wind, exceedingly violent;

5639 Ad were an unjust people spoilt by their prosperity. The prophet Hud preached to them in vain. They were apparently destroyed by a terrible blast of wind. See n. 1040 to 7:65. See also 41:15-16, n. 4483, and 54:19, n. 5144.

7. He made it rage against them seven nights and eight days in succession: so that thou couldst see the (whole) people lying prostrate in its (path), as they had been roots of hollow palm trees(5640) tumbled down!

5640 A graphic simile. Dead men all lying about like hollow trunks of palm trees with their roots exposed! The 'Ad were reputed to be of a tall stature.

8. Then seest thou any of them left surviving?(5641)

5641 The calamity was thorough. Ad were destroyed, and then Thamud, and only the tradition of them was left behind. See the references in n. 5636.

9. And Pharaoh,(5642) and those before him,(5643) and the Cities Overthrown,(5644) committed habitual Sin.

5642 Pharaoh's Messenger was Moses. See the story in 7:103-137 and the notes there. Pharaoh was inordinately proud, and his fall was proportionately great: it gradually extended to his dynasty and his people: See Appendix V of S. 7.

5643 If we follow the sequence of peoples whose sins destroyed them, as mentioned in 7:59-158, we begin with Noah, then have Ad, and Thamud, then the Cities of the Plain, then Midian, then the people whose prophet was Moses (who occupies a central place in the canvas), and then the Pagan Quraysh, to whom came the last and the greatest of the prophets, our Prophet Muhammad. This is the chronological sequence. Here there is no detail, nor even complete mention. But Noah is alluded to last, and 'Ad and Thamud mentioned first, because the latter two belong to Arab tradition, and this is specially addressed to the Pagans of Makkah. Pharaoh is mentioned rather than Moses for the same reason, and any others are "those before Pharaoh".

5644 *The Cities Overthrown:* Sodom and Gomorrah, Cities of the Plain, to whom Lot preached see 9:70, n. 1330; and 7:80-84, n. 1049.

10. And disobeyed (each) the messenger of their Lord; so He punished them with an abundant Penalty.

11. We, when the water (of Noah´s Flood) overflowed beyond its limits,(5645) carried you (mankind), in the floating (Ark),

5645 It was a widespread Flood. *Cf.* 7:59-64; also 11:25-49. Noah was ridiculed for his preparations for the Flood: see 11:38, n. 1531. But Allah had commanded him to build an Ark , in order that mankind should be saved from perishing in the Flood. But only those of Faith got into the Ark and were saved. As the Ark was built to Allah's command, Allah "carried you (mankind) in the floating (Ark)". (R).

12. That We might make it a Message(5646) unto you, and that ears (that should hear the tale and) retain its memory should bear its (lessons) in remembrance.(5647)

5646 It was a memorial for all time, to show that evil meets with its punishment, but the good are saved by the mercy of Allah.

5647 *Cf.* the biblical phrase, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15). But the phrase used here has a more complicated import. An ear may hear, but for want of will in the hearer the hearer may not wish, for the future or for all time, to retain the memory of the lessons he has heard, even though for the time being he was impressed by it. The penetration of the Truth has to be far deeper and subtler, and this is desired here.

13. Then, when one blast is sounded on the Trumpet,(5648)

5648 We now come to the Inevitable Event, the Day of Judgement, the theme of this Surah. This is the first Blast referred to in 39:68, n. 4343.

14. And the earth is moved, and its mountains,(5649) and they are crushed to powder at one stroke,-

5649 The whole of our visible world, as we now know it, will pass away, and a new world will come into being. The mountains are specially mentioned, because they stand as a type of hardness, size, and durability. They will be "crushed to powder", *i.e.,* lose their form and being at one stroke *(Cf.* 89:21).

15. On that Day shall the (Great) Event come to pass.

16. And the sky will be rent asunder, for it will that Day be flimsy,

17. And the angels will be on its sides,(5650) and eight will, that Day, bear the Throne(5651) of thy Lord above them.

5650 The whole picture is painted in graphic poetical images, to indicate that which cannot be adequately described in words, and which indeed our human faculties with their present limited powers are not ready to comprehend. The angels will be on all sides, arrayed in ranks upon ranks, and the Throne of the Lord on high will be borne by eight angels (or eight rows of angels). That will be the Day when Justice will be fully established and man be mustered to his Lord for reckoning. (R).

5651 The number eight has perhaps no special significance, unless it be with reference to the shape of the Throne or the number of the angels. The Oriental Throne is often octagonal, and its bearers would be one at each corner. (R).

18. That Day shall ye be brought to Judgment: not an act of yours that ye hide will be hidden.

19. Then he that will be given his Record in his right hand(5652) will say: "Ah here! Read ye my Record!

5652 *Cf.* 17:71, where the righteous are described as those who are given their record in their right hand at judgement. In 56:27, 38, and other passages, the righteous are called "Companions of the Right Hand".

20. "I did really understand(5653) that my Account would (One Day) reach me!"

5653 The righteous one rejoices that the faith he had during this world's life was fully justified, and is now actually realised before him. He quite understood and believed that good and evil must meet with their due consequences in the Hereafter, however much appearances may have been against it in the life in the lower world, "in the days that are gone."

21. And he will be in a life of Bliss,

22. In a Garden on high,

23. The Fruits whereof(5654) (will hang in bunches) low and near.

5654 The symbolism is that of ripe, luscious grapes, hanging low in heavy bunches, so near that they could be gathered and enjoyed in dignified ease. *Cf.* also 55:54 and 76:14.

24. "Eat ye and drink ye, with full satisfaction; because of the (good) that ye sent before you,(5655) in the days that are gone!"(5656)

5655 *Cf.* 2:110: "Whatever good ye send forth for your souls before you, ye shall find it with Allah: for Allah sees well all that ye do."

5656 It will be a wholly new world, a new earth and a new heaven, when the blessed might well think with calm relief of "the days that are gone". *Cf.* 14:48, and n. 1925. Even Time and Space will be no more, so that any ideas that we may form here will be found to have become wholly obsolete by them.

25. And he that will be given his Record in his left hand,(5657) will say: "Ah! Would that my Record had not been given to me!

5657 This is in contrast to the righteous ones who will receive their record in their right hand. *Cf.* 69:19, n. 5652. The righteous are glad when they remember their past: their memory is itself a precious possession. The unjust are in agony when they remember their past. Their memory is itself a grievous punishment.

26. "And that I had never realised how my account (stood)!

27. "Ah! Would that (Death)(5658) had made an end of me!

5658 The death as from this life was but a transition into a new world. They would wish that that death had been the end of all things, but it will not be.

28. "Of no profit to me has been my wealth!

29. "My power has perished from me!"...(5659)

5659 The intensest agony is when the soul loses power over itself, when the personality tries to realise itself in new conditions and cannot: this is life in death.

30. (The stern command will say): "Seize ye him, and bind ye him,(5660)

5660 Perhaps the word for 'bind' should be construed: 'bind his hands round his neck, to remind him that his hands when they were free were closed to all acts of charity and mercy': *Cf.* 17:29.

31. "And burn ye him in the Blazing Fire.

32. "Further, make him march in a chain, whereof(5661) the length is seventy cubits!

5661 The sinful men who will be given their record on the Day of Judgement in their left hands will be in utter despair. Their power and authority which they misused to perpetrate injustice and oppression will be gone. The wealth that had made them turn a deaf ear to the call of truth will be no more. They will cry out in agony, "O would that we were never raised again! O would that death had obliterated us once for all". But these cries will be of no avail. They will be seized, bound in chains and thrown into the Blazing Fire for their crimes against Allah and man. [Eds.].

33. "This was he that would not believe(5662) in Allah Most High.

5662 The grip of sin was fastened on sinners because they forsook Allah. They ran after their own lusts and worshipped them or they ran after Allah's creatures, ignoring Him Who is *the* cause and source of all good.

34. "And would not encourage(5663) the feeding of the indigent!

5663 *Cf.* 107:3; 89:18. The practical result of their rebellion against the God of Mercy was that their sympathies dried up. Not only did they not help or feed those in need, but they hindered others from doing so. And they have neither friend nor sympathy (food) in the Hereafter.

35. "So no friend hath he here this Day.

36. "Nor hath he any food except the corruption(5664) from the washing of wounds,

5664 They wounded many people by their cruelty and injustice in this life, and it is befitting that they should have no food other than "the corruption from the washing of wounds". (R).

37. "Which none do eat but those in sin."

38. So I do call to witness(5665) what ye see,

5665 This is an adjuration in the same form as that which occurs in 56:75, 70:40, 90:1, and elsewhere. Allah's Word is the quintessence of Truth. But what if someone doubts whether a particular message is Allah's Word communicated through His Messenger, or merely an imaginary tale presented by a poet, or a soothsayer's vain prophecy? Then we have to examine it in the light of our highest spiritual faculties. The witness to that Word is what we know in the visible world, in which falsehood in the long run gives place to truth, and what we know in the invisible world, through our highest spiritual faculties. We are asked to examine and test it in both these ways.

39. And what ye see not,

40. That this is verily the word of an honoured messenger;(5666)

5666 *Honoured messenger:* one that is worthy of honour on account of the purity of his life, and may be relied upon not to invent things but to give the true inner experiences of his soul in Revelation.

41. It is not the word of a poet:(5667) little it is ye believe!

5667 A poet draws upon his imagination, and the subjective factor is so strong that though we may learn much from him, we cannot believe as facts the wonderful tales he has to tell. And the poet who is not a Seer is merely a vulgar votary of exaggerations and falsehoods.

42. Nor is it the word of a soothsayer:(5668) little admonition it is ye receive.

5668 A soothsayer merely pretends to foretell future events of no profound spiritual consequence. Most of his prophecies are frauds, and none of them is meant to teach lessons of real admonition. Such admonition is the work of an honoured prophet.

43. (This is) a Message sent down from the Lord of the Worlds.

44. And if the messenger were to invent any sayings in Our name,

45. We should certainly seize him by his right hand,(5669)

5669 The right hand is the hand of power and action. Anyone who is seized by his right hand is prevented from acting as he wishes or carrying out his purpose. The argument is that if an imposter were to arise, he would soon be found out. He could not carry out his fraud indefinitely. But the prophets of Allah, however much they are persecuted, gain more and more power every day, as did the Prophet, whose truth, earnestness, sincerity, and love for all, were recognised as his life unfolded itself. (R).

46. And We should certainly then cut off the artery of his heart:(5670)

5670 This would effectually stop the functioning of his life.

47. Nor could any of you withhold him(5671) (from Our wrath).

5671 The protection which the prophets of Allah enjoy in circumstances of danger and difficulty would not be available for imposters. (R).

48. But verily this is a Message for the Allah.fearing.

49. And We certainly know that there are amongst you those that reject (it).

50. But truly (Revelation) is a cause of sorrow(5672) for the Unbelievers.

5672 The Message of Allah is glad tidings for those who believe in Him and follow His Law, for it is a message of Mercy and Forgiveness through repentance and amendment. But in the case of the wicked it is a cause of sorrow, for it denounces sin and proclaims the punishment of those who do not turn from evil (*Cf.* 2:187).

51. But verily it is Truth(5673) of assured certainty.

5673 All Truth is in itself certain. But as received by men, and understood with reference to men's psychology, certainty may have certain degrees. There is the probability or certainty resulting from the application of man's power of judgement and his appraisement of evidence. This is *Him al yaqin,* certainty by reasoning or inference. Then there is the certainty of seeing something with our own eyes. "Seeing is believing."This is *'ain al yaqin,* certainty by personal inspection. See 102:5, 7. Then, as here, there is the absolute Truth, with no possibility of error of judgement or error of the eye, (which stands for any instrument of sense-perception and any ancillary aids, such as microscopes, etc.). This absolute Truth is the *haqq al yaqin* spoken of here.

52. So glorify the name(5674) of thy Lord Most High.

5674 As Allah has given us this absolute Truth through His Revelation, it behooves us to understand it and be grateful to Him. We must celebrate His praises in thought, word and deed.



70. Al Ma'arij (The Ways of Ascent)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A questioner asked(5675) about a Penalty to befall-

5675 Any one might ask. When will Judgement come? That question usually implies doubt. The answer is: the mystery of Time is beyond man's comprehension. But there is something which touches him closely and concerns his conduct and his future welfare; and that is explained in four propositions: (1) Judgement is sure to come, and none can ward it off; (2) it will exact a dreadful Penalty from Unbelievers, but the righteous have nothing to fear; (3) it will be a Penalty from Allah, the Lord of both Justice and Mercy, it will not be merely a blind calamity of fate; and (4) further we are reminded of another title of Allah. "Lord of the Ways of Ascent"; which means that though He sits high on His Throne of Glory, He is not inaccessible, but in His infinite Mercy has provided ways of ascent to Him; see next note.

2. The Unbelievers, the which there is none to ward off,-

3. (A Penalty) from Allah, Lord of the Ways of Ascent.(5676)

5676 *Ma'arij:* stairways, ways of ascent. In 43:33, the word is used in its literal sense: "silver stairways on which to go up". Here there is a profound spiritual meaning. Can we reach up to Allah Most High? In His infinite grace He gives that privilege to angels and spiritual beings, man being such in his highest aspect. But the way is not easy, nor can it be travelled in a day. See the next two notes.

4. The angels and the Spirit(5677) ascend unto him in a Day(5678) the measure whereof is (as) fifty thousand years:

5677 *Ruh:* "The Spirit", *Cf.* 78:38, "the Spirit and the angels"; and 97:4, "the angels and the Spirit". In 16:2, we have translated *R uh* by *"inspiration'* Some Commentators understand the angel Gabriel by "the Spirit". But I think a more general meaning is possible, and fits the context better. (R).

5678 *Cf.* 32:4-5, and notes 3632 and 3634.

5. Therefore do thou hold Patience,- a Patience of beautiful (contentment).(5679)

5679 The prophet of Allah, persecuted and in trouble with the world, should yet hold Patience-not the sort of patience which goes with complaints expressed or suppressed, but the sort of patience that is *content* with the ordering of Allah's world, for he believes and knows it to be good, as did the Prophet Muhammad. Such a patience is akin to Good Pleasure, for it arises from the purest faith and trust in Allah. (R).

6. They see the (Day) indeed as a far-off (event):

7. But We see it (quite) near.(5680)

5680 The men of evil may see the just retribution for their sins so far off that they doubt whether it would ever come. But in Allah's sight, and on the scale of the Universal Plan, it is quite near; for time as we know it hardly exists in the spiritual world. It may come even in this life: but it is bound to come eventually.

8. The Day that the sky will be like molten brass,(5681)

5681 *Cf.* 18:29 (where the wrongdoer will have a drink like melted brass in Hell); and 44:45, (where his food will be like molten brass). Here the appearance of the sky is compared to molten brass, or, as some understand it, like the dregs of oil. What is conveyed by the metaphor is that the beautiful blue sky will melt away.

9. And the mountains will be like wool,(5682)

5682 *Cf.* 101:5, where the metaphor of carded wool is used. The mountains which seem so solid will be like flakes of wool driven by the carder's hand.

10. And no friend will ask after a friend,(5683)

5683 The world as we know it will have so completely passed away that the landmarks in the heavens and on earth will also have vanished. Not only that, but the human relationships of mind and heart will have been transformed by sin into something ugly and dreadful. The sinners will be so overcome with tenor at *the* realisation of their personal responsibility that they will desert their most intimate friends, and indeed their very sight of each other will add to their agony.

11. Though they will be put in sight of each other,- the sinner´s desire will be: Would that he could redeem himself from the Penalty of that Day(5684) by (sacrificing) his children,

5684 The sinner will offer his children, his family, his kinsmen, who had sheltered and protected him-in fact everything on earth that he could-as a ransom for himself. Such would be his selfishness and his agony.

12. His wife and his brother,

13. His kindred who sheltered him,

14. And all, all that is on earth,- so it could deliver him:(5685)

5685 What would not the sinner give for his own deliverance! But nothing could save him. The Fire of Hell would be roaring for him!

15. By no means! for it would be the Fire of Hell!-

16. Plucking out (his being) right to the skull!-(5686)

5686 It would be a Fire not only burning his body, but reaching right up to his brains and his understanding and—as is said in 104:7—his heart and affections also. In other words the Penalty typified by the Fire will burn into his inmost being.

17. Inviting (all) such as turn their backs(5687) and turn away their faces (from the Right).

5687 The analysis of sin is given in four masterstrokes, of which the first two refer to the will or psychology of the sinner, and the last two to the use he makes of the good things of this life. (1) Sin begins with turning your back to the Right, refusing to face it squarely, running away from it whether from cowardice or indifference. (2) But Conscience and the sense of Right will try to prevent the flight; the Grace of Allah will meet the sinner at all corners and try to reclaim him; the hardened sinner will deliberately turn away his face from it, insult it, and reject it. (3) The result of this psychology will be that he will abandon himself to greed, to the collection of riches, and the acquisition of material advantages to which he is not entitled; this may involve hypocrisy, fraud, and crime. (4) Having acquired the material advantages, the next step will be to keep others out of them, to prevent hoarded wealth from fructifying by circulation, to conceal it from envy or spite. This is the spiritual Rake's Progress.

18. And collect (wealth) and hide it (from use)!

19. Truly man was created very impatient;-(5688)

5688 Man, according to the Plan of Allah, was to be in the best of moulds (95:4). But in order to fulfil his high destiny he was given free will to a limited extent. The wrong use of this free will makes his nature weak (4:28), or hasty (17:11), or impatient, as here. That becomes his nature by his own act, but he is spoken of as so created because of the capacities given to him in his creation.

20. Fretful when evil touches him;

21. And niggardly when good reaches him;-(5689)

5689 In adversity he complains and gets into despair. In prosperity he becomes arrogant and forgets other people's rights and his own shortcomings. *Cf.* 41:49-50.

22. Not so those devoted to Prayer;-(5690)

5690 The description of those devoted to Prayer is given in a number of clauses that follow, introduced by the words "Those who . . .". "Devoted to Prayer" is here but another aspect of what is described elsewhere as the Faithful and the Righteous. Devotion to prayer does not mean merely a certain number of formal rites or prostrations. It means a complete surrender of one's being to Allah. This means an earnest approach to and realisation of Allah's Presence ("steadfastness in Prayer"); acts of practical and real charity; and attempt to read this life in terms of the Hereafter; the seeking of the Peace of Allah and avoidance of His displeasure; chastity; probity; true and firm witness; and guarding the sacredness of the Presence (verse 34).

23. Those who remain steadfast to their prayer;

24. And those in whose wealth is a recognised right.

25. For the (needy) who asks and him who is prevented (for some reason from asking);(5691)

5691 See n. 5001 to 51:19. True charity consists in finding out those in real need, whether they ask or not. Most frequently those who ask are idle men who insolently wish to live upon others. But all cases of those who ask should be duly investigated, in case a little timely help may set the erring on the way. But the man with wealth or talent or opportunity has the further responsibility of searching out those in need of his assistance, in order to show that he holds all gifts in trust for the service of his fellow creatures.

26. And those who hold to the truth of the Day of Judgment;

27. And those who fear(5692) the displeasure of their Lord,-

5692 A true fear of Allah is the fear of offending against His Holy Will and Law, and is therefore akin to the love of Allah. It proceeds from the realisation that all true peace and tranquillity comes from attuning our will to the Universal Will, and that sin causes discord, disharmony, and displeasure—another name for the Wrath of Allah.

28. For their Lord´s displeasure is the opposite of Peace and Tranquillity;-(5693)

5693 Some would construe this verse: "And their Lord's displeasure is one against which there is no security"; meaning that the punishment of sin may come suddenly at any time, when you least expect it.

29. And those who guard their chastity,

30. Except with their wives and the (captives) whom(5694) their right hands possess,- for (then) they are not to be blamed,

5694 Captives of war may be married as such: see 4:25: but their status is inferior to that of free wives until they are free. This institution of the captives of war is now obsolete. Such inferiority of status as there was, was in the status of captivity, not in the status of marriage as such, in which there are no degrees except by local customs, which Islam does not recognise.

31. But those who trespass beyond this are transgressors;-

32. And those who respect their trusts and covenants;(5695)

5695 For obligations of trusts and covenants, express or implied, see n. 682 to 5:1. They are just as sacred in ordinary everyday life as they are in special spiritual relationships. In addition, our life itself, and such reason and talents as we possess, as well as our wealth and possessions are trusts, of which we must fulfil the duties punctiliously.

33. And those who stand firm in their testimonies;(5696)

5696 If we know any truth of any kind, to that we must bear witness, as affecting the lives or interests of our fellow beings-firmly, not half-heartedly, without fear or favour, even if it causes loss or trouble to us, or if it loses us friends or associates.

34. And those who guard (the sacredness) of their worship;-(5697)

5697 Worship or prayer includes honest work, charity, and every good deed. To guard the sacredness of this ideal is to sum up the whole duty of man. We began with "steadfastness in prayer" in verse 23 above, and after a review of various aspects of the good man's life, close with the sacredness of worship, *i.e.,* living as in the sight of Allah.

35. Such will be the honoured ones in the Gardens (of Bliss).

36. Now what is the matter with the Unbelievers that they rush madly before thee-(5698)

5698 *Before thee.* The Unbelievers did not believe in a Hereafter. When the Bliss of the Hereafter was described, as in the last verse, they ridiculed it and pretended to be running in for it as in a race. They are here rebuked in the same tone of sarcasm.

37. From the right and from the left, in crowds?

38. Does every man of them long to enter the Garden of Bliss?

39. By no means! For We have created them out of the (base matter) they know!(5699)

5699 The animal part of man is nothing to be proud of, and they know it. It is by spiritual effort, and long preparation through a good life that a man can rise above the mere animal part of him to his high dignity as a spiritual being, and his noble destiny in the Hereafter.

40. Now I do call to witness(5700) the Lord of all points in the East and the West(5701) that We can certainly-(5702)

5700 For the form of adjuration, *C.,* 69:38, n. 5665; also 56:75. Here the witness placed before us by Allah is His own power and glory manifested in the splendour of sunrise and sunset at different points through the solar year.

5701 See n. 4034 to 37:5. If Allah has such power in the wonderful phenomena of the rising of the sun at varying points, repeated year after year, can you not see that He can easily substitute better men than you Unbelievers and blasphemers?

5702 The transition from the singular "I" to the plural "We" may be noted. See n. 56 to 2:38

41. Substitute for them better (men) than they; And We are not to be defeated (in Our Plan).

42. So leave them to plunge in vain talk and play about,(5703) until they encounter that Day of theirs which they have been promised!-

5703 Their talk, their scepticism, is vain, because all spiritual evidence is against it, it is like the foolish play of people who do not think seriously. But the tremendous Day of Judgement and Reality will come, as described in the next two verses.

43. The Day whereon they will issue from their sepulchres in sudden haste as if they were rushing to a goal-post (fixed for them),-(5704)

5704 Now there will be a definite Goalpost or Banner or Standard of Truth fixed, which all must acknowledge. But they will acknowledge it in shame and dejection. For the time for their repentance and amendment will then have passed.

44. Their eyes lowered in dejection,- ignominy covering them (all over)! such is the Day the which they are promised!



71. Nuh (Noah)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. We sent Noah(5705) to his People (with the Command): "Do thou warn thy People before there comes to them a grievous Penalty."

5705 Noah's mission is referred to in many places. See specially 11:25-49 and notes. His contemporaries had completely abandoned the moral law. A purge had to be made, and the great Flood made it. This gives a new starting point in history for Noah's People - i.e., for the remnant saved in the Ark.

2. He said: "O my People! I am to you a Warner, clear and open:(5706)

5706 His Warning was to be both clear (*i.e.,* unambiguous) and open (*i.e.,* publicly proclaimed). Both these meanings are implied in *Mubin. Cf.* 67:26. The meaning of the Warning was obviously that if they had repented, they would have obtained mercy.

3. "That ye should worship Allah, fear Him and obey me:(5707)

5707 Three aspects of man's duty are emphasised: (1) true worship with heart and soul; (2) God-fearing recognition that all evil must lead to self-deterioration and Judgement; (3) hence repentance and amendment of life, and obedience to good men's counsels.

4. "So He may forgive you your sins and give you respite for a stated Term: for when the Term given by Allah is accomplished, it cannot be put forward:(5708) if ye only knew."

5708 Allah gives respite freely; but it is for Him to give it. His command is definite and final; neither man nor any other authority can alter or in any way modify it. If we could only realise this to the full in our inmost soul, it would be best for us and lead to our happiness.

5. He said: "O my Lord! I have called to my People night and day:

6. "But my call only increases (their) flight (from the Right).(5709)

5709 When convincing arguments and warnings are placed before sinners, there are two kinds of reactions. Those who are wise receive admonition, repent, and bring forth fruits of repentance, *i.e.,* amend their lives and turn to Allah. On the

other hand, those who are callous to any advice take it up as a reproach, fly farther and farther from righteousness, and shut out more and more the channels through which Allah's healing Grace can reach them and work for them.

7. "And every time I have called to them, that Thou mightest forgive them, they have (only) thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with(5710) their garments, grown obstinate, and given themselves up to arrogance.

5710 The literal meaning would be that, just as they thrust their fingers into their ears to prevent the voice of the admonisher reaching them, so they covered their bodies with their garments that the light of truth should not penetrate to them and that they should not even be seen by the Preacher. But there is a further symbolic meaning. "Their garments" are the adornments of vanities, their evil habits, customs, and traditions, and their ephemeral interests and standards. They drew them closer round them to prevent the higher Light reaching them. They grew obstinate and gave themselves up to the grossest form of selfish arrogance.

8. "So I have called to them aloud;

9. "Further I have spoken to them in public(5711) and secretly in private,

5711 Noah used all the resources of the earnest preacher: he dinned the Message of Allah into their ears; he spoke in public places; and he took individuals into his confidence and appealed to them; but all in vain.

10. "Saying, ´Ask forgiveness from your Lord; for He is Oft-Forgiving;

11. "´He will send rain(5712) to you in abundance;

5712 They had perhaps been suffering from drought or famine. If they had taken *the* message in the right way, the rain would have been a blessing to them. They took it in the wrong way, and the rain was a curse to them, for it flooded the country and drowned the wicked generation. In the larger Plan, it was a blessing all the same; for it purged the world, and gave it a new start, morally and spiritually.

12. "´Give you increase in wealth and sons; and bestow on you gardens and bestow on you rivers (of flowing water).(5713)

5713 Each of these blessings— rain and crops, wealth and manpower, flourishing gardens, and perennial streams—are indications of prosperity, and have not only a material but also a spiritual meaning. Note the last point, "rivers of flowing water". The perennial springs make the prosperity as it were permanent; they indicate a settled population, honest and contented, and enjoying their blessings here on earth as the foretaste of the eternal joys of heaven.

13. "´What is the matter with you, that ye place not your hope for kindness and long-suffering in Allah,-(5713-A)

5713-A An alternative translation would be ". . . that ye fear Allah's Message", *i.e.,* why don't you fear Allah's Majesty, His greatness, and consequent punishment for your sinfulness; and hope for His mercy, kindness, and reward for your faith and good deeds? The words of the verse contain the twin strands—fear and hope-simultaneously. (R).

14. "´Seeing that it is He that has created you in diverse stages?(5714)

5714 *Cf.* 22:5, and notes 2773-2777; also 23:12-17, and notes 2872-2875. The meaning here may be even wider. Man in his various states exhibits various wonderful qualities or capacities, mental and spiritual, that may be compared with the wonderful workings of nature on the earth and in the heavens. Will he not then be grateful for these Mercies and turn to Allah, Who created all these marvels?

15. "´See ye not how Allah has created the seven heavens one above another,(5715)

5715 See n. 5559 to 67:3.

16. "´And made the moon a light in their midst, and made the sun as a (Glorious) Lamp?(5716)

5716 *Cf.* 25:61, where the sun is referred to as the glorious Lamp of the heavens: "Blessed is He Who made the Constellations in the skies, and placed therein a lamp, and a moon giving light."

17. "´And Allah has produced you from the earth growing (gradually),(5717)

5717 *Cf.* 3:37, where the growth of the child Mary the Mother of Jesus is described by the same word *nabat,* ordinarily denoting the growth of plants and trees. The simile is that of a seed sown, that germinates, grows, and dies, and goes back to the earth. In man, there is the further process of the Resurrection *Cf.* also 20:55.

18. "´And in the End He will return you into the (earth), and raise you forth (again at the Resurrection)?

19. "´And Allah has made the earth for you as a carpet (spread out),(5718)

5718 *Cf.* 20:53.

20. "´That ye may go about therein, in spacious roads.´"(5719)

5719 *Fijaj* implies valley roads or passes between mountains. Though there are mountain chains on the earth, Allah's artistry has provided even in such regions, valleys and channels by which men may go about. Mountain roads usually follow the valleys.

21. Noah said: "O my Lord! They have disobeyed me, but they follow (men)(5719-A) whose wealth and children give them no increase but only Loss.

5719-A Sinners always resent it as a reproach that righteous men should speak to them for their own good. They prefer smooth flatterers, and they worship power even though the depositories of power are selfish men, who neither profit themselves nor profit others by the wealth and manpower that they collect round themselves. They forget that mere material things may be a delusion and a snare unless the moral and spiritual factor behind them sanctifies them.

22. "And they have devised a tremendous Plot.(5720)

5720 Having got material resources the wicked devise plots to get rid of the righteous whose presence is a reproach to them. For a time their plots may seem tremendous and have the appearance of success, but they can never defeat Allah's Purpose.

23. "And they have said (to each other), ´Abandon not your gods:(5721) Abandon neither Wadd nor Suwa´, neither Yaguth nor Ya´uq, nor Nasr´;-

5721 For an account of how these Pagan gods and superstitions connected with them originated, and how they became adopted into the Arabian Pagan Pantheon, see Appendix X at the end of this Surah.

24. "They have already misled many; and grant Thou no increase to the wrong- doers but in straying (from their mark)."(5722)

5722 Such Pagan superstitions and cults do not add to human knowledge or human well-being. They only increase error and wrongdoing. For example, how much lewdness resulted from the Greek and Roman Saturnalia! And how much lewdness results from ribald Holy songs! This is the natural result, and Noah in his bitterness of spirit prays that Allah's grace may be cut off from men who hug them to their hearts. They mislead others: let them miss their own mark! See also verse 28 below.

25. Because of their sins they were drowned (in the flood),(5723) and were made to enter the Fire (of Punishment): and they found- in lieu of Allah. none to help them.

5723 The Punishment of sin seizes the soul from every side and in every form. Water (drowning) indicates death by suffocation, through the nose, ears, eyes, mouth, throat, and lungs. Fire has the opposite effects; it burns the skin, the limbs, the flesh, the brains, the bones, and every part of the body. So the destruction wrought by sin is complete from all points of view. And yet it is not death (20:74); for death would be a merciful release from the Penalty, and the soul steeped in sin has closed the gates of Allah's Mercy on itself. There they will abide, unless and

"except as Allah willeth" (6:128). For time and eternity, as we conceive them now, have no meaning in the wholly new world which the soul enters after death or Judgement.

26. And Noah, said: "O my Lord! Leave not of the Unbelievers, a single one on earth!(5724)

5724 The Flood was sent in order to purge all sin. The prayer of Noah is not vindictive. It simply means, "Cut off all the roots of sin". See next note.

27. "For, if Thou dost leave (any of) them, they will but mislead Thy devotees, and they will breed none but wicked ungrateful ones.

28. "O my Lord! Forgive me, my parents, all who enter my house in Faith, and (all) believing men and believing women:(5725) and to the wrong-doers grant Thou no increase but in Perdition!"(5726)

5725 Indeed he prays for himself, his parents, his guests, and all who in earnest faith turn to Allah, in all ages and in all places. Praying for their forgiveness is also praying for the destruction of sin.

5726 This is slightly different in form from verse 24 above, where see n. 5722. See also last note.



72. Al Jinn (The Spirits)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Say: It has been revealed(5727) to me that a company of Jinns(5728) listened (to the Qur´an). They said, ´We have really heard a wonderful Recital!(5729)

5727 Revelation may be through various channels, and one of the channels may be a vision, by which the Prophet sees and hears events clearly passing before him. This particular vision may be the same as that referred to more briefly in 46:29-32, where see n. 4809. The Jinns had evidently heard of previous revelations, that of Moses (46:30), and the error of Trinitarian Christianity (72:3). The people from whom they come have all sorts of good and bad persons, but they are determined to preach the good Message of Unity which they have heard and believed in.

5728 For Jinns, see n. 929 to 6:100. (R).

5729 The Holy Qur'an would be to them a wonderful Recital-both in subject matter and in the circumstance that it had come in Arabia among a pagan and ignorant nation.

2. ´It gives guidance to the Right, and we have believed therein: we shall not join (in worship) any (gods) with our Lord.

3. ´And Exalted is the Majesty of our Lord: He has taken neither a wife nor a son.(5730)

5730 They abjure paganism and also the doctrine of a son begotten by Allah, which would also imply a wife of whom he was begotten. *Cf.* 6:101.

4. ´There were some foolish ones among us, who used to utter extravagant lies against Allah.

5. ´But we do think that no man or spirit should say aught that untrue against Allah.(5731)

5731 No one ought to entertain false notions about Allah. For by joining false gods in our ideas of worship, we degrade our conception of ourselves and the duty we owe to our Creator and Cherisher, to Whom we have to give a final account of life and conduct. If we worship idols or heavenly bodies, or human beings, or any creature, or false fancies born of self or foolish abstractions, or the lusts and desires of our own hearts, we are not only doing violence to Truth, but we are causing discord in the harmony of the world.

6. ´True, there were persons among mankind who took shelter with persons among the Jinns, but they increased them in folly.(5732)

5732 If human beings think that by a resort to some mysterious spirits they can shelter themselves from the struggles and actualities of their own lives, they are sadly mistaken. They must "dree their own weird", as the Scots would say. It is folly to try to escape from the duties which they can understand in their own natural surroundings, or to try to avoid the consequences of their own acts. Only such persons do so as do not realise that they will ultimately have to answer at the Judgement Seat of Allah, whose first outpost is in their own conscience.

7. ´And they (came to) think as ye thought, that Allah would not raise up any one (to Judgment).

8. ´And we pried into the secrets of heaven; but we found it filled with stern guards and flaming fires.(5733)

5733 See notes 1951, 1953, and 1954 to 15:17-18. See also n. 5562 to 67:5. The speakers here have repented of sin and evil; but they recognise that there are evil ones among them, who love stealth and prying, but their dark plots will be defeated by vigilant guardians of the Right, whose repulse of the attacks of evil is figured by the shafts of meteoric light in the heavens.

9. ´We used, indeed, to sit there in (hidden) stations, to (steal) a hearing; but any who listen now(5734) will find a flaming fire watching him in ambush.

5734 What is the force of "now"? It refers to the early Makkan period of Revelation. It means that whatever excuse there may have been before, for people to try to seek out the hidden truths of the Unseen World through spirits, there was none now, as the perspicuous Qur'an had restored the Message of Unity and cleared religion of all the cobwebs, mysteries, and falsehoods with which priestcraft and pious fraud had overlaid it. The result is that such seekers after false hidden knowledge will find themselves confronted now by the flaming fire of the Qur* an, which, like the shafts of meteoric light (see last note), will lie in wait for and nip such priestcraft and black magic in the bud.

10. ´And we understand not whether ill is intended to those on earth,(5735) or whether their Lord (really) intends to guide them to right conduct.

5735 To these spirits this revolutionary gospel is yet new, and appears like a flaming sword which destroys falsehood while it protects Truth. They frankly confess that they do not clearly understand whether on the whole it will be a mercy to mankind or a punishment for mankind forsaking the paths of Allah. But they rightly feel that it must be a blessing if all seek right Guidance.

11. ´There are among us some that are righteous, and some the contrary: we follow divergent paths.

12. ´But we think that we can by no means frustrate Allah throughout the earth, nor can we frustrate Him by flight.(5736)

5736 See last note. In any case, they know that Allah's Truth and Allah's Plan must prevail, and no one can frustrate Allah's Purpose, or escape from it. Why not then bring the human will into conformity with it, and find Peace, as they have found, by the acceptance of Faith?

13. ´And as for us, since we have listened to the Guidance, we have accepted it: and any who believes in his Lord has no fear, either(5737) of a short (account) or of any injustice.

5737 Possibly, from this world's standards, it may be that a man suffers for his Faith. He may be laughed at, persecuted, and actually hurt, "in mind, body, or estate". But he is not perturbed. he takes it all cheerfully, because he knows that when his full account is made up-real gain against apparent loss-he is a gainer rather than a loser. And his Faith tells him that Allah is ajust God, and will never allow him to suffer any injustice, or permit the account of his merit to appear one whit shorter than it is.

14. ´Amongst us are some that submit their wills (to Allah., and some that swerve from justice. Now those who submit their wills - they have(5738) sought out (the path) of right conduct:

5738 Any one who responds to true Guidance, and submits his will to Allah, finds that he makes rapid progress in the path of right conduct and right life. He gets more and more assurance that his destination is the Garden of Bliss .

15. ´But those who swerve,- they are (but) fuel for Hell-fire´-(5739)

5739 An unjust life carries its own condemnation. It does no good to itself or to anyone else. It bears no fruit. It becomes merely fuel for the Fire of Punishment.

16. (And Allah.s Message is): "If they (the Pagans) had (only) remained on the (right) Way, We should certainly have bestowed on them Rain(5740) in abundance.

5740 *Rain:* literally, water: stands for all kinds of blessings, material, moral, and spiritual. Among the spiritual blessings, is the insight into higher things, which results from our will and endeavour to stand firm on the right Way, the natural, moral, and spiritual Law established by Allah. All blessings come by way of trial: the more we have, the more is expected of us. A man of gifts, talents, or insight is expected to show a higher standard of love and unselfishness than one less gifted, just as a rich man is expected to give more in charity than a poor man.

17. "That We might try them by that (means). But if any turns away from the remembrance(5741) of his Lord, He will cause him to undergo a severe Penalty.

5741 To remember Allah is to realise His presence, acknowledge His Goodness, and accept His guidance. If we fail to do so, by deliberately turning away, He will withdraw His Grace, and that will be a severe Penalty indeed.

18. "And the places of worship(5742) are for Allah (alone): So invoke not any one along with Allah.

5742 This is a Makkan Surah, and *Masjid* must be understood, not in the later technical sense of a Mosque, but in the root meaning, of any place, or occasion of worship or humble prostration in the service of Allah, or any limbs of faculties or accessories used in such worship, *e.g.,* hands and feet, lips and voice, understanding or organisation. A number of meanings therefore follow: (1) No place of worship whatever should be used for the worship of any other but Allah the true God. The Ka'bah was then full of idols, but the idols and their votaries were usurpers. (2) Worship should not be mixed up with vain objects, but should be reserved for the sincere service of Allah. (3) All our gifts are for Allah's service, which includes the service of His creatures, and not for our vainglory. (R).

19. "Yet when the Devotee(5743) of Allah stands forth to invoke Him, they(5744) just make round him a dense crowd."

5743 *The Devotee of Allah:* the Prophet Muhammad.

5744 *They.* The immediate reference was to the Pagan Quraysh who were then in possession of the Ka'bah and who put all sorts of obstacles and indignities in the way of Prophet for preaching the One True God and denouncing idol-worship. They used to surround him and mob him and to treat him as if he was guilty of some dreadful crime. But the wider application refers to the habit of the world to make a marked man of any who diverges from the beaten paths of their favourite sins and who pleads earnestly for the cause of truth and righteousness. They ridicule him; they surround him with jeers and obloquy; and they try to make the physical condition of his life as difficult for him as possible.

20. Say: "I do no more than invoke my Lord, and I join not with Him any (false god)."

21. Say: "It is not in my power to cause(5745) you harm, or to bring you to right conduct."

5745 'Do not suppose that I am going to harm you individually or socially; the very opposite is my wish; but I cannot force you to right conduct; that must depend upon the purification of your own faith and will.'

22. Say: "No one can deliver me from Allah(5746) (If I were to disobey Him), nor should I find refuge except in Him,

5746 'My mission is from Allah. I cannot choose but obey. He has charged me to deliver the Message, and if I were to disobey him, I would myself be worthy of His punishment, and no one can save me. From every kind of trouble and difficulty my only refuge is in Him. I must proclaim His Message: otherwise I am false to the mission He has entrusted to me.'

23. "Unless I proclaim what I receive from Allah and His Messages: for any that disobey Allah and His Messenger,- for them is Hell: they shall dwell therein for ever."

24. At length, when they see (with their own eyes) that which they are promised,-(5747) then will they know who it is that is weakest in (his) helper and least important in point of numbers.

5747 When the Hereafter arrives, and true values are restored, they will see clearly that the Promise of Allah was true, and that death on this earth was not the end of all things. Then they will see that those who were accounted weak on this earth will, in the realm of Reality, be strong ones; those who seemed to have no following here will have, there, all the great and true ones with them, to help them and welcome them to their own ranks.

25. Say: "I know not whether the (Punishment) which ye are promised is near,(5748) or whether my Lord will appoint for it a distant term.

5748 The coming of Judgement is certain. But the exact time, relatively to our standards on this earth, no one can tell. Allah alone knows it. Even a Prophet of Allah, as such, does not know the Mysteries of the Unseen World, except insofar as they have been revealed to him by Allah's Revelation. *Cf.* 6:50, and notes 867-868.

26. "He (alone) knows the Unseen, nor does He make any one acquainted with His Mysteries,-(5749)

5749 *Mystery,* or the Unseen, has two aspects. The relative Unseen is so with reference to a particular person, because of the intervention of Time, Space, or particular circumstances. For example: I cannot see today a house which I saw last year, because it has since been pulled down; or I cannot in Lahore see the "Gateway of India" in Bombay, although anyone in Bombay can see it; or I cannot see the satellites of Jupiter with the naked eye, though I can through a telescope; but the Absolute Unseen, the Absolute Mystery, or Allah's Mystery, is something which no creature can know or see, except insofar as Allah reveals it to him; and Allah reveals such things to the extent that is good for men, through His chosen messengers, among whom the greatest is Muhammad. The exact time of the Hour of Judgement has not been so shown, because we must not wait for it, but live as if it is to be at this minute. See last note and next note, and the references there.

27. "Except a messenger(5750) whom He has chosen: and then He makes a band of watchers(5751) march before him and behind him,

5750 *Cf.* 3:179, and n. 482. See also last note.

5751 Revelation is not a mechanical or material thing. It has to be safeguarded from being distorted or corrupted by ignorance, selfishness, or the powers of evil. How can its precious and subtle worth and the spiritual safeguards against its misuse by human folly or the perversity of evil be expressed in plain human words? We can imagine a very great treasure, which has to be transmitted. To guard it against evilly-disposed persons, a strong escort is required, to march in front and behind, so as to protect it from all sides. When it reaches its destination, the escort presents its credentials and an Invoice showing the Treasure being transmitted. Then the destined receiver knows that it has come intact and feels satisfied. So, about spiritual Revelation, the spiritual man recognises the credentials and checks the contents on the tablets of his own heart and insight. He has then no doubt that it is a true Message from Allah, and that those who bring it are the true messengers "of their Lord" (R).

28. "That He may know that they have (truly)(5751-A) brought and delivered the Messages of their Lord: and He surrounds(5752) (all the mysteries) that are with them, and takes account of every single thing."(5753)

5751-A *They:* the band of watchers. In "he may know" it is better to construe "he" to refer to the Prophet who receives the Message from the "watchers".

5752 *Ahata:* surrounds, encompasses, encloses, guards on all sides, keeps under his own possession and control, and does not allow to be corrupted or debased. See last note but one.

5753 In the spiritual Kingdom—as indeed, in all things—Allah's knowledge, wisdom, and Plan comprehend all things, great and small. There is nothing which we do, nothing which happens that is outside His account. *(Cf.* 17:60).



73. Al Muzzammil (The Enfolded One)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. O thou folded in garments!(5754)

5754 *Muzzammil:* Some Commentators understand by this, "properly dressed for prayer", or "folded" in a sheet, as one renouncing the vanities of this world. *Muzzammil* is one of the titles of our Prophet. But there is a deeper mystic meaning in this and the address "Thou wrapped up" of the next Surah. Human nature requires warm garments and wrappings to protect the body from cold or heat or rain. But in the spiritual world these wrappings are useless; the soul must stand bare and open before Allah, in the silence of the night, but not too austerely, as the following verses show.

2. Stand (to prayer) by night, but not all night,-(5755)

5755 The Prophet was prone to austerities in the cave of Hira ', both before and after he received his mission, spending days and nights in prayer and contemplation. See C. 29. Midnight and after-midnight prayers have technically received the name of *Tahajjud.* See also verse 20 below; also 17:79. (R).

3. Half of it,- or a little less,

4. Or a little more; and recite the Qur´an(5756) in slow, measured rhythmic tones.

5756 At this time there was only S. 96, S. 68, and possibly S. 74, and the opening Surah *(Al Hamd);* but the heart of the Messenger had received enlightenment, and that Light was gradually finding expression in the verse of the Qur'an. For us, now, with *the* whole of the Qur'an before us, the injunction is specially necessary. The words of the Qur'an must not be read hastily, merely to get through so much reading. They must be studied, and their deep meaning pondered over. They are themselves so beautiful that they must be lovingly pronounced in tones of rhythmic music.

5. Soon shall We send down to thee a weighty Message.(5757)

5757 The Qur'an as completed by degrees, after the *Fatrah* (see Introduction to this Surah).

6. Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing (the soul), and most suitable for (framing) the Word(5758) (of Prayer and Praise).

5758 For contemplation, prayer, and praise, what time can be so suitable as the night, when calm and silence prevail, the voices of the marketplace are still, and the silent stars pour forth their eloquence to the discerning soul.

7. True, there is for thee by day prolonged occupation with manifold engagements:(5759)

5759 A prophet of Allah, as a man, a member of a family, or a citizen, has many manifold duties to perform; and his work may be made difficult and irksome in protecting those who listen to his preaching and are therefore molested and persecuted by the world. But while discharging all his manifold duties, he should work as in the presence of Allah, and in all matters and at all times retain the sense of Allah's nearness. His work may be on earth, but his heart is in Heaven.

8. But keep in remembrance the name of thy Lord and devote thyself to Him whole-heartedly.

9. (He is) Lord of the East and the West: there is no god but He: take Him therefore for (thy) Disposer of Affairs.(5760)

5760 Allah is all-in-all-. He is Lord of all places. He rules the world. Therefore be not discouraged by the plots or enmity of wicked men. Leave all things to Allah; trust Him; He is just and will do justice. Only turn away from the unjust, but in a worthy, noble way; *i.e.,* to show them clearly that you do not fear them, but that you leave all affairs in Allah's hands. If we divide the world into hemispheres from the north to south, "East and West" will cover all directions.

10. And have patience with what they say, and leave them with noble (dignity).

11. And leave Me (alone to deal with) those in possession of the good things of life,(5761) who (yet) deny the Truth; and bear with them for a little while.

5761 Men who enjoy the good things of life have special cause for gratitude to Allah, Who bestowed them. When they are in the ranks of Allah's enemies, none but Allah can adequately deal with them.

12. With Us are Fetters(5762) (to bind them), and a Fire(5763) (to burn them),

5762 *Cf.* 13:5; 34:33; 40:71 and 69:30-32. [Eds.].

5763 *Cf.* 44:47 and 56:94. [Eds.].

13. And a Food that chokes,(5764) and a Penalty Grievous.(5765)

5764 *Cf.* 44:43-44; 56:52; 69:36-37, and 88:6. [Eds.].

5765 In general terms, the Penalty of sin may be described as a Penalty Grievous, an Agony. It may come in this very life, but that in the Hereafter is certain! See next verse.

We can also consider punishments from another aspect. The first object of punishment is to protect the innocent from the depredations of the criminal; we have to bind him. The next object is to produce in his heart the fire of repentance, to consume his evil proclivities and to light his conscience. Where that is not enough, a more drastic punishment for the callous is something which causes him pain in things which ordinarily cause him pleasure, such as food, drink, and the satisfaction of physical needs. People in whom the higher spiritual faculties are dead may perchance be awakened through the lower physical features of their life, which appeal to them. Where this also fails, there is finally the complete Agony, a type or symbol too terrible to contemplate,

14. One Day the earth and the mountains will be in violent commotion. And the mountains will be as a heap of sand poured out and flowing down.(5766)

5766 The Judgement is described as a violent commotion which will change the whole face of nature as we know it. Even the hard rock of mountains will be like loose sand running without any cohesion.

15. We have sent to you, (O men!) a messenger, to be a witness concerning you,(5767) even as We sent a messenger to Pharaoh.

5767 Our Prophet has to warn his age, *i.e.,* the present age, reclaim it from sin, and be a witness for the righteous and against evil, as Moses did his office in his age. For Pharaoh, his arrogance, and his punishment, see 10:75-92.

16. But Pharaoh disobeyed(5768) the messenger; so We seized him with a heavy Punishment.

5768 Pharaoh the earthly king faces Moses the Prophet of Allah. In earthly eyes it was Moses who disobeyed Pharaoh. In spiritual relations, it was Pharaoh who disobeyed Moses. Pharaoh represented an ancient and mighty kingdom, with a long history behind it, and a pride in its learning and science, art, organisation, and power. Moses led a depressed people, hewers of wood and drawers of water. But the might of Allah was behind him. What became of the wisdom, power, and armies of Pharaoh? They were rent asunder when the day came, and the terror and surprise must have been the same as if the heavens had been rent asunder, and children's hair had turned grey! But formidable revolutions turn children grey-haired in another way. Nations that were as children became wise before they in their turn decayed, and from similar disobedience to the laws of Allah. For Allah's law must stand and be fulfilled when all else is swept away.

17. Then how shall ye, if ye deny (Allah), guard yourselves against a Day that will make children hoary-headed?-(5769)

5769 If already you deny and disobey Allah in this life of probation, how can you stand up to the Day of Judgement, the Day of the terrible Reality? That Day is described in two metaphors; (1) It will be a time of such stress that even children will become like hoary-headed men; (2) What we look upon as the eternal sky, ever the same, will be cleft asunder; *Cf.* '82:1. In other words, the shape of things will be completely altered, both within man and in outer nature, and all true values will be restored. For the Promise of Allah, in this as in all other respects, cannot but be fulfilled.

18. Whereon the sky will be cleft asunder? His Promise needs must be accomplished.

19. Verily this is an Admonition:(5770) therefore, whoso will, let him take a (straight) path to his Lord!

5770 This is no empty threat. It is an admonition for your good. If you have the will, you can at once come for the Grace and Mercy of Allah, and obtain it. For Repentance and Amendment are the straight Way to the nearness of Allah.

20. Thy Lord doth know that thou standest forth (to prayer) nigh two-thirds of the night, or half the night, or a third(5771) of the night, and so doth a party of those with thee. But Allah doth appoint night and day in due measure He knoweth that ye are unable to keep count thereof.(5772) So He hath turned to you (in mercy): read ye, therefore, of the Qur´an(5773) as much as may be easy for you. He knoweth that there may be (some) among you in ill-health; others travelling through the land, seeking of Allah's bounty; yet others fighting(5774) in Allah's Cause, read ye, therefore, as much of the Qur´an as may be easy (for you); and establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity; and loan to Allah a Beautiful Loan.(5775) And whatever good ye send forth for your souls,(5776) ye shall find it in Allah's Presence,- yea, better and greater, in Reward and seek ye the Grace of Allah: for Allah is(5777) Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

5771 *Cf.,* above, 73:2-4. The Prophet, and a zealous band of his disciples, were often up, two-thirds of the night, or a half, or a third, rejecting sleep and giving themselves up to Prayer and Praise and the reading of the Qur'an. They are told that this was too severe a tax on them, especially if their health was affected, or they were on a journey, or they were striving, with might and main, in other ways, for the cause of Allah. See the lines following.

5772 The usual meaning taken is that the counting of the exact hours of night and day may not be possible for ordinary people, in order to determine exactly the half, or the third, or the two-thirds of a night. The length of the night and day varies everyday of the solar year, and the precise hour of midnight can only be determined by exact observation in clear skies or by chronometers, which is not possible for everyone. But I understand it in a wider meaning. Allah fixes night and day in due proportions; for rest and work, and according to seasonal variations. For prayer and praise no meticulous observations of that kind are necessary or possible. Allah's service can be done in many ways as detailed below. But we must give some time to devotion, as may be most easy and convenient to us, in various circumstances of health, travel, and the performance of various duties.

5773 The reading of the Qur'an here is a part of Prayer and religious devotion. This is not to be made into an obsession or a burden. *Cf.* 20:2: "We have not sent down the Qur'an to thee to be an occasion for thy distress." We must do it whole-mindedly, but not by formal mechanical computations.

5774 This refers to Jihad. The better opinion is that this particular verse was revealed in Madinah, long after the greater part of the Surah. The reference, further on, to canonical Prayers and regular Charity *(Zakah),* points to the same conclusion.

5775 *Cf.* 2:245, and n. 276, where the meaning of "a Beautiful Loan" is explained. See also 57:18. The "Beautiful Loan" should be that of our own souls. We should expect no returns in kind, for that is not possible. But the reward we shall find with Allah will be infinitely greater and nobler. *Cf.* the biblical phrase, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. vi. 20).

5776 Any good that we do raises our own spiritual status and dignity. We must not think that when we speak of Allah's service or Allah's Cause, we are doing anything for His benefit: He is independent of all needs whatsoever.

5777 This emphasises the need of Allah's Grace. Whatever good we do, our own merits are comparatively small. Allah's Grace must lift us up and blot out our shortcomings. Even in piety there may be an arrogance which may become a sin. We should always seek Allah's Mercy in all humility.

74. Al Muddaththir (The One Wrapped Up)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. O thou wrapped up(5778) (in the mantle)!

5778 In these wonderful early mystic verses there is a double thread of thought; (1) A particular occasion or person is referred to; (2) a general spiritual lesson is taught. As to (1), the Prophet was now past the stage of personal contemplation, lying down or sitting in his mantle; he was now to go forth; boldly to deliver his Message and publicly proclaim the Lord; his heart had always been purified, but now all his outward doings must be dedicated to Allah, and conventional respect for ancestral customs or worship must be thrown aside; his work as a Messenger was the most generous gift that could flow from his personality, but no reward or appreciation was to be expected from his people, but quite the contrary; there would be much call on his patience, but his contentment would arise from the good pleasure of Allah. As to (2), similar stages arise in a minor degree in the life of every good man, for which the Prophet's life is to be a universal pattern. (R).

2. Arise and deliver thy warning!

3. And thy Lord do thou magnify!

4. And thy garments(5779) keep free from stain!

5779 Possibly, in its immediate application, there is a reference to the dirt and filth which the Pagans used to throw at the Prophet to insult and persecute him.

5. And all abomination shun!(5780)

5780 *Rujz or Rijz:* abomination: usually understood to refer to idolatry. It is even possible that there was an idol called *Rujz.* But it has a wider signification, as including a mental state opposed to true worship, a state of doubt or indecision.

6. Nor expect, in giving, any increase (for thyself)!(5781)

5781 The legal and commercial formula is that you give in order to receive. And usually you expect to receive what is worth to *you* a little more than you give. The spiritual consideration is that you give, but expect nothing from the receiver. You serve Allah and Allah's creatures.

7. But, for thy Lord´s (Cause),(5782) be patient and constant!

5782 Our zeal for Allah's Cause itself requires that we should not be impatient, and that we should show constancy in our efforts for His Cause. For we have faith, and we know that He is All-Good, All-Wise, and All-Powerful, and everything will ultimately be right.

8. Finally, when the Trumpet is sounded,

9. That will be- that Day - a Day of Distress,-(5783)

5783 The Sinner's course is now shown in contrast to the Seeker's. The Sinner may be self-complacent now; but what will be his position when the Reckoning comes? Not easy; indeed a Day of Distress!

10. Far from easy for those without Faith.

11. Leave Me alone, (to deal)(5784) with the (creature) whom I created (bare and) alone!-(5785)

5784 The question of Justice and Punishment to men is for Allah alone. For man at his best can see only one side of truth, and only Allah is All-Knowing. He alone can judge the limits of Justice and Mercy.

5785 Man's adventitious advantages—wealth, power, position, talents—are not due to his own merits. They are gifts from Allah, Who created him. In himself he came bare and alone.

12. To whom I granted resources in abundance,

13. And sons to be by his side!-(5786)

5786 The great ones of the earth may have wealth, a large following, sons by their side to defend them and do their bidding and manpower to help them in their battles. Life may be smooth and agreeable to them. But their responsibility is to Allah.

14. To whom I made (life) smooth and comfortable!

15. Yet is he greedy-that I should add (Yet more);-(5787)

5787 The Sinner takes Allah's gifts as if they were his right. The more he gets, the more is he greedy. Yet to Allah's Signs and revelations he is willfully deaf or even openly rebellious. But he is only preparing the way for his own undoing.

16. By no means! For to Our Signs he has been refractory!

17. Soon will I visit him with a mount of calamities!(5788)

5788 "A mount of calamities" or disasters: may be understood as a phrase for cumulative disasters. (R).

18. For he thought and he plotted;-

19. And woe to him!(5789) How he plotted!-

5789 *Cf.* 51:10; "Woe to the falsehood mongers!"

20. Yea, Woe to him; How he plotted!-

21. Then he looked round;

22. Then he frowned and he scowled;

23. Then he turned back and was haughty;

24. Then said he:(5790) "This is nothing but magic, derived from of old;

5790 The Commentators understand the reference to be to Walid ibn Mughayrah, who was a wealthy Sybarite, Pagan to the core, and an inveterate enemy to the Prophet. He and Abu Jahl did all they could, from the beginning of the preaching of Islam, to abuse and persecute the Preacher, to run down his doctrine, and to injure those who believed in it. But the meaning for us is much wider. There are Walids in all ages. They cannot understand divine inspiration, and seek to explain its wonderful influence over the lives of men by some such unmeaning formula as "magic". The eternal Hope is to them mere human delusion!

25. "This is nothing but the word of a mortal!"

26. Soon will I cast him into Hell-Fire!(5791)

5791 The Sinner's perversity can only end in the Fire of Punishment It enters his very being. See next note.

27. And what will explain to thee what Hell-Fire is?

28. Naught doth it permit to endure, and naught(5792) doth it leave alone!-

5792 He is in a state in which he neither lives nor dies (87:13). Looked at in another way, the things that in a good man are meant to last and grow, are for the

sinner destroyed, and no part of his nature is left untouched. The brightness of his very manhood is darkened and extinguished by sin.

29. Darkening and changing the colour of man!

30. Over it are Nineteen.(5793)

5793 The figure nineteen refers to angels appointed to guard Hell. See verse 31 below and the corresponding note. [Eds.].

31. And We have set none(5794) but angels as Guardians of the Fire; and We have fixed their number(5795) only as a trial for Unbelievers,- in order that the People of the Book may arrive at certainty, and the Believers may increase in Faith,- and that no doubts may be left for the People of the Book and the Believers, and that those in whose hearts is a disease and the Unbelievers may say, "What symbol doth Allah intend by this?"(5796) Thus doth Allah leave to stray whom He pleaseth, and guide whom He pleaseth: and none can know the forces of thy Lord, except He.(5797) And this is no other than a warning to mankind.

5794 *Cf.* 66:6, and n. 5540.

There was a great volume of angelology in the religious literature of the People of the Book *(i.e.,* the Jews and Christians) to whom (among others) an appeal is made in this verse. The Essenes, a Jewish brotherhood with highly spiritual ideas, to which perhaps the Prophet Jesus himself belonged, had an extensive literature of angelology. In the Midrash also, which was a Jewish school of exegesis and mystical interpretation, there was much said about angels. The Eastern Christian sects contemporary with the birth of Islam had borrowed and developed many of these ideas, and their mystics owed much to the Gnostics and the Persian apocalyptic systems. In the New Testament the relation of the angels with Fire is referred to more than once. In Rev. 9:11 we have "the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon". In Rev. 14:18 there is an "angel which had power over fire", and in Rev. 16:8 an angel has "power . . . given unto him to scorch men with fire". In the Old Testament (Daniel 7:9-10) me essence of all angels is fire: thousands of them issued as a fiery stream from before the Ancient of Days, whose "throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire".

5795 The mystic significance of numbers is a favourite theme with some writers, but I lay no stress on it. In Christian theology the number of the Beast, 666, in Rev. 13:18 has given rise to much controversy, and may refer only to the numerical value of the letters in the name of the Roman Emperor Nero. In our own literature I think that we ought to avoid too much insistence on speculative conjectures. (R).

5796 There are four classes of people mentioned here: (1) the Muslims will have their faith increased, because they believe that all revelation is from Allah Most Merciful, and all His forces will work in their favour; (2) the People of the Book, those who had received previous revelations of an analogous character, the Jews and Christians, had numerous sects disputing with each other on minute points of doctrine; but they will now, if they believe, find rest from controversies in a broad understanding of scripture; (3) those in whose hearts is a disease (see 2:8-10, notes 33-34), the insincere ones, the hypocrites, will only be mystified, because they believe nothing and have rejected the grace and mercy of Allah; (4) the Unbelievers have frankly done the same and must suffer similar consequences. (R).

5797 It is a necessary consequence of moral responsibility and freedom of choice in man, that he should be left free to stray if he chooses to do so, in spite of all the warning and the instruction he receives. Allah's channels of warning and instruction—His spiritual forces-are infinite, as are His powers. No man can know them. But this warning or reminder is addressed to all mankind.

All things are referred to Allah. But we must not attribute evil to Him. In 4:79 we are expressly told that the good comes from Allah, and the evil from ourselves.

32. Nay, verily: By the Moon,(5798)

5798 An oath in human speech calls in evidence something sacred in the heart of man. In Allah's Message, also, when delivered in human language, solemn emphasis is indicated by an appeal to something striking among the Signs of Allah, which will go straight to the human heart which is addressed. In each case the symbol of the appeal has reference to the particular point enforced in the argument. Here we are asked to contemplate three wonderful phenomena, and they lead up to the conclusion in verse 38. (1) The moon, next after the sun, is the most striking luminary to our sight. Its reflected light has for us even a greater mystery than the direct light of the sun, which looks to us like pure fire. The moon was worshipped as a deity in times of darkness. But in reality, though she rules the night, her rays are only reflections, and are wanting in warmth and vitality. So every soul which looks up to a mere creature of Allah for a sort of vicarious salvation is in spiritual darkness of error; for the true source of spiritual light and life is Allah, and Allah alone. For (2) the Night and (3) the Dawn, see the following note.

33. And by the Night(5799) as it retreateth,

5799 (2) The Night when it is illuminated by the Moon is light in a sense, but it is really dark and must give place to (3) the Dawn when it comes, as the harbinger of the Sun. So in spiritual matters, when every soul realises its own responsibility, it will look less and less to reflected lights, and through the beauty of a dawn-like awakening, will be prepared more and more for the splendour of the light of Allah Himself, the goal of the Heaven of our dreams.

34. And by the Dawn as it shineth forth,-

35. This is but one(5800) of the mighty (portents),

5800 *This is but one, etc.* There are numerous Signs of Allah, of which Judgement is one, and one of the mightiest portents. Or the reference may be to the waning of the Moon, the decline of the night, and the glorious sunrise, as tokens or symbols of the world renewed when the present transitory world passes away. According to some commentators "This" here refers to Hell. (R).

36. A warning to mankind,-

37. To any of you that chooses to press forward, or to follow behind;-(5801)

5801 Three interpretations are possible. (1) Those pressing forward may be the Righteous, and those following behind may be the laggards, the Unbelievers, who reject Allah's love, care, and mercy. (2) Men of two kinds of temperament may be referred to; those who are always in the van and those who are always in the rear. Allah's Message is open to both. But there may be a danger to both; in the one case, overconfidence, or hope in wrong things; in the other case missing great opportunities so that their spiritual lives may be "bound in shallows and in miseries". Extremes should be avoided. (3) Or it may mean that the warning is effective only for those willing to move forwards or backwards, as the case may be, but is lost on the inert or the lethargic. For our moral and spiritual progress, we have in some cases to go forward, but in some cases we have to retreat from false positions. The hopeless case is that of the obstinate man, whose heart is so dead that he dares not advance to the right or withdraw from the wrong.

38. Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds.(5802)

5802 *Cf.* 52:21. Man cannot shift his responsibility to vicarious saviours or saints. His redemption depends upon the grace of Allah, for which he should constantly and wholeheartedly strive by means of right conduct. If he does so he will be redeemed and he will join the Companions of the Right Hand.

39. Except the Companions of the Right Hand,(5803)

5803 *Cf.* n. 5223 to 56:3, and see 56:27-38. The Companions of the Right Hand will be the Righteous or the Blessed in the Hereafter. Their grounds of merit will be Prayer, Charity, Earnestness, and Faith in Allah's just Judgement; all which are within the reach of the humblest Seeker. They are not separate acts of virtues, but are all interconnected. At Judgement, the pledge of their soul will be redeemed by Allah's Grace at the Taking of the Account.

40. (They will be) in Gardens (of Delight): and will ask,

41. Of the Sinners:

42. "What led you into Hell-Fire?"

43. They will say: "We were not of those who prayed;"

44. "Nor were we of those who fed the indigent;"

45. "But we used to talk vanities with vain talkers;"

46. "And we used to deny the Day of Judgment,"

47. "Until there came to us (the Hour) that is certain."(5804)

5804 *Cf.* 15:99, and n. 2018. The Hour that is Certain is usually taken to be Death. (R).

48. Then will no intercession of (any) intercessors profit them.

49. Then what is the matter with them that they turn away from admonition?-(5805)

5805 If the Day of Judgement is inevitable, it is strange that men should not heed a plain warning, but go on as if they were thoughdess and obstinate asses stampeding from a lion. Instead of heeding the warning, they try to avoid it. They are frightened at Allah's Word.

50. As if they were affrighted asses,

51. Fleeing from a lion!

52. Forsooth, each one of them wants to be given(5806) scrolls (of revelation) spread out!

5806 *Cf.* 17:93: "Until thou send down to us a book, that we could read". The Unbelievers pretend, in ridicule, that they would believe if a special message written on open scrolls and addressed to them severally were brought to them by a miracle! There is a disease in their hearts and understandings. The Teacher's warning is plain, and enough for any reasonable person who has the will to seek Allah.

53. By no means! But they fear not the Hereafter,

54. Nay, this surely is an admonition:

55. Let any who will,(5807) keep it in remembrance!

5807 The Qur'an itself is the admonition—the last among the revealed Books of Allah. If man has the will to learn, he will keep the Message always before him, and Allah's Grace will help him to carry it out in his conduct.

56. But none will keep it in remembrance except as Allah wills: He(5808) is the Lord of Righteousness, and the Lord of Forgiveness.

5808 Righteousness as well as Forgiveness have their source in Allah's Will. Man's Righteousness has no meaning except in relation to the Universal Will. For *Taqwa see* n. 26 to 2:2. If we take the word here in the sense of "the fear of Allah", the translation would be: "He alone is worthy to be feared, and He alone is entitled to grant Forgiveness."



75. Al Qiyamah (The The Ressurection)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. I do call to witness(5809) the Resurrection Day;

5809 *Cf.* 70:40, and n. 5700. Here the point to be enforced is understood: I have added it in brackets; "eschew Evil". The appeal is made to two considerations: (1) That every act has to be accounted for, and evil must have its recompense at the Resurrection; and (2) that man's own spirit has a conscience which would reproach him of sin, if he did not suppress that inner voice.

2. And I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit:(5810) (Eschew Evil).

5810 Our doctors postulate three states or stages of the development of the human soul; (1) *Ammarah* (12:53), which is prone to evil, and, if not checked and controlled, will lead to perdition; (2) *Lawwamah,* as here, which feels conscious of evil, and resists it, asks for Allah's grace and pardon after repentance and tries to amend; it hopes to reach salvation; (3) *Mutma'innah* (89:27), the highest stage of all, when it achieves full rest and satisfaction. Our second stage may be compared to Conscience, except that in English usage Conscience is a faculty and not a stage in spiritual development.

3. Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones?(5811)

5811 The Unbelievers' usual cry is: "What! when we are reduced to bones and dust, how can our personality be called to account?" (17:49). The answer is: Allah has said so, and He will do it; for the death here is not the end of all things.

4. Nay, We are able to put together in perfect order the very tips of his fingers.(5812)

5812 An idiom for the most delicate parts of the body.

5. But man wishes to do wrong (even) in the time in front of him.(5813)

5813 It is bad enough not to repent of past sins. But the evildoer who rejects a Day of Reckoning and has no conscience wants to go on in his career of sin and jeopardise his future also.

6. He questions: "When(5814) is the Day of Resurrection?"

5814 The question is sceptical or derisive. He does not believe that there is any chain of consequences in the Hereafter. He does not believe in a Hereafter.

7. At length, when the sight is dazed,(5815)

5815 At the Hour of Judgement the full light and glory of the Lord will shine, and the effulgence will daze man's eyes. For the world as we knew it will go to pieces and a new World will come into being.

8. And the moon is buried in darkness.(5816)

5816 Not only will man's sight be dazed, but the great luminaries themselves will lose their light. The moon with its present reflected light will then cease to shine. All reflected or relative truth or goodness will sink into nothing before the true and Eternal Reality. (R).

9. And the sun and moon are joined together,-(5817)

5817 To the moon the sun is the original light, but the sun itself is a created light, and it will sink into nothingness along with the moon. Both will be like empty shells "whose lights are fled, whose glories dead", because the Prototype of all Light now shines in full splendour in a new World. See n. 4344 to 39:69.

10. That Day will Man say: "Where is the refuge?"

11. By no means! No place of safety!

12. Before thy Lord (alone), that Day will be the place of rest.

13. That Day will Man be told (all) that he put forward, and all that he put back.(5818)

5818 All good and bad deeds, positive and negative, *i.e.,* all sins of commission and omission, and all the good that a man did and all the evil that he omitted, all the influence that he radiated before him and all that he left behind him.

14. Nay, man will be evidence against himself,(5819)

5819 *Cf.* 24:24, and n. 2976: "On the Day when their tongues, their heads, and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions." It is not what a man says about himself, or what others say of him, that determines judgement about him. It is what he is in himself. His own personality betrays him or commends him.

15. Even though he were to put up his excuses.

16. Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qur´an) to make haste therewith.(5820)

5820 *Cf.* 20. 114, and n. 2639: "Be not in haste with the Qur'an before its revelation to thee is completed." S. 75. is an earlier revelation, and the shade of meaning is slightly different. The immediate meaning was that the Prophet was to allow the revelation conveyed to him to sink into his mind and heart and not to be impatient about it; Allah would certainly complete it according to His Plan, and see that it was collected and preserved for men, and not lost; that the inspired one was to follow it and recite it as the inspiration was conveyed to him; and that it carries its own explanation according to the faculties bestowed by Allah on man. The general meaning follows the same lines; we must not be impatient about the inspired Word; we must follow it as made clear to us by the faculties given to us by Allah.

17. It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it:

18. But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated):

19. Nay more, it is for Us to explain it (and make it clear):

20. Nay, (ye men!) but ye love the fleeting life,(5821)

5821 *Cf.* 21:37. Man loves haste and things of haste. For that reason he pins his faith on transitory things that come and go, and neglects the things of lasting moment, which come slowly, and whose true import will only be fully seen in the Hereafter.

21. And leave alone the Hereafter.

22. Some faces, that Day,(5822) will beam (in brightness and beauty);-

5822 This passage (especially with reference to verses 26-28) would seem to refer to what our Doctors call the Lesser Judgement *(at Qiyamah al Sughra),* which takes place immediately after death, and not to the Greater or General Judgement, which may be supposed to be referred to in such passages as occur in S. 56. There are other passages referring to the Lesser Judgement immediately after death; *e.g.,* 7:37 etc. If I understand aright, the punishment of sin takes place in three ways; (1) it may take place in this very life, but this may be deferred, to give the sinner respite; (2) it may be an agony immediately after death, with the Partition or *Barzakh* (23:100) separating the sinner from the final Resurrection; and (3) in the final Resurrection, when the whole of the present order gives place to a wholly new World: 14:48.

23. Looking towards their Lord;

24. And some faces, that Day, will be sad and dismal,

25. In the thought that some back-breaking calamity was about to be inflicted on them;

26. Yea, when (the soul)(5823) reaches to the collar-bone (in its exit),

5823 A symbolic picture of the agony of death.

27. And there will be a cry, "Who is a magician (to restore him)?"

28. And he(5824) will conclude that it was (the Time) of Parting;

5824 'He' = the dying man, whose soul is referred to in verse 26 above.

29. And one leg will be(5825) joined with another:

5825 When the soul has departed, the legs of the dead body are placed together in position, in preparation for the rites preliminary to the burial. *Saq* (literally, leg) may also be taken metaphorically to mean a calamity: calamity will be joined to calamity for the poor departed sinner's soul, as his life story in this world is now done. Willy-nilly, he will now have to go before the Throne of Judgement.

30. That Day the Drive will be (all) to thy Lord!

31. So he gave nothing in charity, nor did he pray!-(5826)

5826 His indictment in this and the succeeding verse consists of four counts: (1) he neglected prayer; (2) he neglected charity; (3) he rejected Truth; and (4) he turned away. In 74:43-46, the four counts are: (1) neglecting prayer; (2) neglecting charity; (3) talking vanities; (4) denying the Day of Judgement; see n. 5803, Nos. (1) and (2) are identical in both places, and Nos. (3) and (4) are analogous. Rejecting the truth is equivalent to talking vanities and making an alliance with falsehoods. Denying the Day of Judgement means behaving as if no account was to be given of our actions. *i.e.,* turning away from right conduct. An additional touch is found here in verse 33. See next note.

32. But on the contrary, he rejected Truth and turned away!

33. Then did he stalk to his family in full conceit!(5827)

5827 Conceit or arrogance is the root cause of most Evil. By that cause fell Iblis: see 2:34.

34. Woe to thee, (O men!), yea, woe!

35. Again, Woe to thee, (O men!), yea, woe!

36. Does man think that he will be left uncontrolled, (without purpose)?(5828)

5828 *Suda:* has many implications; (1) uncontrolled, free to do what he likes; (2) without any moral responsibility; not accountable for his actions; (3) without a purpose, useless; (4) forsaken.

37. Was he not a drop of sperm emitted (in lowly form)?(5829)

5829 *Cf.* 22:5, where the argument is developed in greater detail. The briefer argument here may be stated thus. His lowly animal origin makes him no higher than a brute; his foetal development is still that of a brute animal; then at some stage come human limbs and shape; the divine spirit is poured into him, and he is fashioned in due proportion for his higher destiny. In spite of that the mystery of sex remains in his nature: we are living souls, yet men and women. Allah Who creates these wonders-has He not the power to bring the dead to life at the Resurrection? (see also n. 5116).

38. Then did he become a leech-like clot; then did ((Allah)) make and fashion (him) in due proportion.

39. And of him He made two sexes, male and female.

40. Has not He, (the same), the power to give life to the dead?

76. Al Insan (Man) or Al Dahr (The Time)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Has there not been(5830) over Man a long period of Time,(5831) when he was nothing - (not even) mentioned?

5830 The undoubted fact is mentioned in the form of a question, to get the assent of man. It is certain that the physical world existed long before man was ever heard of or mentioned, as geological records prove. It is also true that the spiritual world existed long before man came on the scene: see 2:30-31. Man is here taken in a generic sense.

5831 *Dahr is* Time as a whole, or for a long period. Time used to be deified by the Pagan Arabs, as explained in the Introduction to this Surah. An analogy can be found in the Greek ideas connected with Chronos or Kronos, themselves a blend of different myths. Kronos (or Time), they said, was the father of Zeus himself.

2. Verily We created Man from a drop of mingled sperm,(5832) in order to try him: So We gave him (the gifts), of Hearing and Sight.

5832 *Mingled:* the female ovum has to be fertilised with the male sperm before a new animal can be born. Man as an animal has this humble origin. But he has been given the gift of certain faculdes of receiving instruction (typified by Hearing) and of intellectual and spiritual insight (typified by Sight). His life has therefore a meaning: with a certain amount of free will, he is to be Allah's vicegerent on earth (2:30). But he must be trained and tried, and that is the whole problem of human life.

3. We showed him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests(5833) on his will).

5833 Besides the gift of the faculties, Man has been shown the Way by means of Revelation, through men of the highest spiritual standing. If he is grateful, he will accept Guidance, be of the Righteous, and join the company of the Blessed. If not, he puts chains round himself, thus burdening himself with sin, and gets into the Blazing Fire of Punishment. See next verse. His choice rests on his will. (R).

4. For the Rejecters we have prepared chains, yokes, and a Blazing Fire.(5834)

5834 *Cf.* 13:5; 34:33 and 40:71. [Eds.].

5. As to the Righteous, they shall drink of a Cup (of Wine) mixed with Kafur,-(5835)

5835 *Kafur* is literally Camphor. It is a fountain in the Realms of Bliss. It is a seasoning added to the Cup of pure, beatific Wine, which causes no intoxication (56:18-19), but stands for all that is wholesome, agreeable, and refreshing. Camphor is cool and refreshing, and is given as a soothing tonic in Eastern medicine. In minute doses its odour and flavour are also agreeable. (R).

6. A Fountain where the Devotees of Allah do drink, making it flow in unstinted abundance.

7. They(5836) perform (their) vows,(5837) and they fear a Day whose evil flies far and wide.(5838)

5836 *They: i.e.,* the Righteous: they are known in the present life by the virtues symbolically described in verses 7-10, and in the life of the Hereafter they will enjoy the Bliss symbolically described in verses 11-22.

5837 *Cf.* 22:29. The vows must be vows of spiritual service, which of course includes service to humanity, such as is mentioned in the next verse. They are Devotees of Allah, and they must perform all vows and contracts (5:1 and n. 682). Vows of the Pagan sort, savouring of a sort of "bribe" to the Deity, are not approved.

5838 That is, they prepare for the Judgement to come, where the effects of Sin will not be transitory but far-reaching.

8. And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive,-(5839)

5839 *The captive:* when taken literally, it refers to the old state of things when captives of war had to earn their own food, or their own redemption; even ordinary prisoners in jail for criminal offences often starved unless food was provided for them by private friends or from their own earnings. But there is a further symbolic meaning, which applies to the indigent, the orphans, and the captives, *viz.* those who are so in a spiritual sense: those have no mental or moral resources, or have no one to look after them, or are held down in social or moral or economic captivity. They hunger for spiritual food, or perhaps their appetite is deadened, but the Righteous understand and supply their real needs. It has also been held that "captives" include dumb animals who are under subjection to man; they must be properly fed, housed, and looked after; and the righteous man does not forget them.

9. (Saying),"We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.(5840)

5840 These words need not be actually uttered. They express the true motives of pious and unpretentious Charity.

10. "We only fear a Day of distressful Wrath from the side of our Lord."(5841)

5841 It is a Day of Wrath for sin and evil. But the truly righteous are not self-righteous. They have the fear of Allah in their minds: they know they are human, and they fear lest they should be found wanting in the sight of Allah. But Allah in His Mercy gives them a bountiful Reward.

11. But Allah will deliver them from the evil of that Day, and will shed over them a Light(5842) of Beauty and (blissful) Joy.

5842 *Cf.* 75:22-23.

12. And because they were patient and constant, He will reward them with a Garden and (garments of) silk.(5843)

5843 *Cf.* 22:23.

13. Reclining in the (Garden) on raised thrones,(5844) they will see there neither the sun´s (excessive heat) nor (the moon´s) excessive cold.(5845)

5844 *Cf.* 18:31.

5845 The sun and the moon as we know them will be no longer there. It will be a new world on a different plane. But to give us an idea of comfort we recall the excessive heat of the sun especially in tropical climates, and the excessive cold of the moon especially in northern climates, and we negate them both. That is, the temperature will be just that delightful one that is most agreeable to our sensations as we know them now. The moon is not mentioned, but *Zamharir* (excessive cold) is sometimes used for the moon. (R).

14. And the shades of the (Garden) will come low over them, and the bunches (of fruit), there, will hang low in humility.(5846)

5846 Without sun and moon there will of course be no shade in the literal sense of the word. But for full comfort, there will be sheltering shade for rest and change from whatever light there be. But the whole idea here is that of humility. Even the shadows show humility: *cf.* 13:15. So does the fruit in hanging low for man. Man has now reached the height of his dignity. (R).

15. And amongst them will be passed round vessels of silver(5847) and goblets of crystal,-

5847 *Cf.* 43:71, where "dishes and goblets of gold" are mentioned. The idea conveyed is that of rarity, preciousness, and spotless splendour. (R).

16. Crystal-clear, made of silver:(5848) they will determine the measure thereof (according to their wishes).

5848 That is, silver polished and white, and shining like crystal.

17. And they will be given to drink there of a Cup (of Wine) mixed(5849) with Zanjabil,-

5849 *Cf.* above, 76:5-6, and n. 5835, where the Cup of *Kafur* (Camphor) was mentioned for coolness and refreshment to the Righteous, who had just passed the great Event of Judgement. The second stage is symbolised by verses 12-14, when they enter the Garden in Garments of Silk, and find that their former humility in the probationary life is rewarded with high honour in the new world they have entered. The third stage is in verses 15-21, where they settle down in Bliss, with Garments of fine silk and heavy brocades, with Ornaments and Jewels, with an ordered Feast of set service, and the Cup of *Zanjabil.* This literally means Ginger. In Eastern medicine Ginger is administered to give warmth to the body and zest to the taste; this is appropriate for the Royal Feast which is now figured forth. (R).

18. A fountain there, called Salsabil.(5850)

5850 *Salsabil* literally means: "Seek the Way". The Way is now open to the presence of the Most High. The Banquet is spread. Get thyself ready. It is a "Realm Magnificent" (verse 20) in a new spiritual world. (R).

19. And round about them will (serve) youths of perpetual (freshness):(5851) If thou seest them, thou wouldst think them scattered Pearls.(5852)

5851 *Cf.* 56:17 and n. 5231.

5852 *Pearls for* beauty and splendour: *scattered,* because they are moving to and fro all round the Banquet.

20. And when thou lookest, it is there thou wilt see a Bliss and a Realm Magnificent.

21. Upon them will be green Garments of fine silk and heavy brocade, and they will be adorned with Bracelets of silver;(5853) and their Lord will give to them to drink of a Wine Pure and Holy.(5854)

5853 *Cf.* 18:31. The bracelets are there said to be of gold.

5854 This would seem to be the culmination of the honour which the Blessed receive at the Royal and Divine Banquet. The words in the next verse express the sort of speech which will make the Guest a denizen of Heaven. (R).

22. "Verily this is a Reward for you, and your Endeavour is accepted and recognised."

23. It is We Who have sent down the Qur´an to thee by stages.(5855)

5855 The Qur'an was being revealed stage by stage as the occasion demanded and at the date of this Surah it was still one of the earlier stages. Persecution, abuse, and false charges were being levelled against the man of Allah, but he is bidden to stand firm and do his duty. In a minor degree this applies to all of us who suffer in the cause of Truth.

24. Therefore be patient with constancy to the Command of thy Lord, and hearken not to the sinner or the ingrate among them.

25. And celebrate the name(5856) or thy Lord morning and evening,

5856 Three methods of Prayer and Devotion are mentioned: (1) to remember and celebrate the Holy Name of Allah always; (2) to spend a part of the night in humble prostration; and (3) to glorify Him in the long hours of a weary night of waiting and watching. As to (1), "morning and evening" means all the waking hours of our life, but in the special hours of morning and evening the physical world without us, and the inner world within us, combine to make us specially receptive of spiritual influences. The "name" of Allah includes His attributes, as a locked golden casket might include priceless jewels. Anyone may carry the casket, even though he may not be worthy to handle the jewels. If he carries the casket, he is in potential possession of the jewels, and he hopes some time to get the key which opens the jewels to him. So the tyro, who celebrates the Holy Name of Allah, hopes some day to see the "Face" of Allah and be blessed with the privilege of proximity to His Person. For (2) and (3) see next note. (R).

26. And part of the night, prostrate thyself to Him; and glorify Him(5857) a long night through.

5857 See last note. (2) Humble *prostration* to Allah means some visible mode or symbol of dedication. That is best done at night, when the soul, free from worldly occupations, is alone with its God. (3) The weary hours of a long night are no longer weary, but become full of meaning when we join in concert with the whole Creation, which glorifies Allah: 57:1.

27. As to these, they love the fleeting life, and put away behind them(5858) a Day (that will be) hard.

5858 *Fleeting life: Cf.* 75:20. *They:* the immediate reference was to the Pagan Quraysh; the general reference is to the Unbelievers of all ages. They reject, or at least put away the thought of, a Hereafter, a Day that will be hard, for the easy pleasures of a fleeting life.

28. It is We Who created them, and We have made their joints strong;(5859) but, when We will, We can substitute the like of them(5860) by a complete change.

5859 Allah has not only created men, but "made their joints strong", *i.e.,* given them the power and strength to withstand the temptations of Evil and stand firmly in the Padi of Right.

5860 If, in spite of Allah's loving care, any particular men or group of men, misuse their powers or wilfully disobey Allah's Law, Allah will set them aside, and substitute others in their place, with like powers. Allah's gifts are free, but let no one think that he can monopolise them or misuse them without being called to answer for the trust. And the man of Allah must not be discouraged by the whole world being at some moment completely against him. Allah can in a moment make a complete change. Either the same men that fought against him will be his zealous adherents, or another generation will spring up, which will carry the flag of Righteousness to victory. Allah's Will and Plan work in their own good time.

29. This is an admonition: Whosoever will, let him take a (straight) Path to his Lord.

30. But ye will not, except as Allah wills;(5861) for Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom.

5861 Man in himself is weak; he must seek Allah's Grace; without it he can do nothing; with it he can do all. For Allah knows all things, and His wisdom comprehends the good of all.

31. He will admit to His Mercy whom He will;(5862) But the wrong-doers,- for them has He prepared a grievous Penalty.

5862 That is according to His just and wise Plan. If the will is right, it obtains Allah's Grace and Mercy. If the will of man rejects Allah, man must suffer the Penalty.

77. Al Mursalat (Those Sent Forth)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the (Winds) Sent Forth(5863) one after another (to man´s profit);(5864)

5863 This Surah begins with an appeal to five things, as pointing to the substantive statement in verse 7, that the Day of Justice and Judgement is bound to come, and we must prepare for it. It is difficult to translate, but easy to understand, if we remember that a triple thread of allegory runs through this passage (verses 1-7). The five things or phases, which will be presently considered in detail, refer to (a) Winds in the physical world, (b) Angels in the spiritual world, and (c) Prophets in the human world, connecting it with the spiritual world.

5864 Understanding the reference to Winds, we can see that they are powerful factors in the government of the physical world. (1) They come gently as harbingers of the blessings of rain and fertility (15:22, 30:48); but (2) they can come as violent tornadoes, uprooting and destroying (51:41-42); (3) they can scatter seeds far and wide, and (4) they can separate chaff from grain, or clear the air from epidemics; and (5) they literally carry sound, and therefore Messages, and metaphorically they are instrumental in making Allah's Revelation accessible to hearers, whether by way of justification or repentance for the Penitent, or warning for unrepentant Sinners. All these things point to the power and goodness of Allah, and we are asked to believe that His promise of Mercy and Justice in the Hereafter is indeed true. *Cf.* this passage with 51:1-6 *(Al Dhariyat)* with which it has many affinities.

2. Which then blow violently in tempestuous Gusts,(5865)

5865 If we understand the reference to be, not to Winds, but to Angels, they are agencies in the spiritual world, which carry out similar functions, changing and revolutionising the face of the world. (1) They come softly, on beneficent errands of Mercy; (2) they are charged with the mission of punishment and destruction for sin as in the case of the two angels who came to Lut (15:57-66); (3) they distribute Allah's Mercies as the Winds distribute good seeds; (4) they sort out the good from the evil among men; and (5) they are the agency through which Allah's Messages and Revelations are conveyed to the Prophets (see No. 5 in the last note).

3. And scatter (things) far and wide;

4. Then separate them, one from another,

5. Then spread abroad a Message,(5866)

5866 If we understand the reference to Prophets or Messengers of Allah, or the verses of Revelation which would be particularly appropriate for verses 5-6, we also get a satisfactory solution of the Allegory. (1) The Prophets have followed one another in a series: the verses of the Qur'an came, one after another as needed; in both cases it was for man's spiritual profit; (2) they caused great disturbance in a spiritually decadent world; they pulled down evil institutions root and branch, and substituted new ones; (3) they proclaimed their truths far and wide, without fear and without favour; (4) through them were sorted out men of Faith and rebels against Allah's Law; and (5) they gave a Message, through which just men were justified through repentance, and evil men were warned of their sins.

Some Commentators take one or other of these allegories, and some apply one allegory to a few of these verses, and another to another few. In my opinion the Allegory is wide enough to comprehend all the meanings which I have sketched. I wish a translation could do justice to those marvellously terse sentences in the original.

6. Whether of Justification or of Warning;-

7. Assuredly, what ye are promised must come to pass.

8. Then when the stars become dim;(5867)

5867 The lustre of the stars will become dim; in fact they will disappear: *cf.* 81:2, and 82:2. The heaven's canopy will be torn asunder: *cf.* 82:1, and 73:18. The mountains will be uprooted and fly about like dust: *cf.* 69:14, 81:3, etc. All the old landmarks of the physical world as we know them will be swept away. (R).

9. When the heaven is cleft asunder;

10. When the mountains are scattered (to the winds) as dust;

11. And when the messengers are (all) appointed a time (to collect);-(5868)

5868 The Resurrection will be established. In the world which will then have passed away, inspired Prophets had been sent in succession at different times to all nations. Now they will be gathered together in one place before the Judgement Seat to bear witness as to the righteous or the evil ones within their respective spheres of work. *Cf.* 39:69.

12. For what Day are these (portents) deferred?

13. For the Day of Sorting out.(5869)

5869 *Cf.* 37:21 and n. 4047; also 44:40, and n. 4718- That will be the Day of Judgement or Day of Decision. Good will then be completely separated from Evil. And the men who rejected Truth and flourished on Falsehood will find that in the world of Realities they will be absolutely nowhere. Hence the refrain of this Surah, "Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!". It sounds like a dirge on Sin.

14. And what will explain to thee what is the Day of Sorting out?

15. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

16. Did We not destroy the men of old(5870) (for their evil)?

5870 Allah's Law is always the same. Sin or corruption prepares its own destruction. It was so with the generation of Noah. In Arab tradition it was so with the 'Ad and the Thamud. In our own day we see relics of prehistoric civilisations, in Egypt , Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley , and the Aegean : these were men of wonderful skill and resource, but they went under. If our generations, which pride themselves on their science and skill, desert Allah's Law, they will be certain to meet the same fate.

17. So shall We make later (generations) follow them.

18. Thus do We deal with men of sin.

19. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

20. Have We not created you from a fluid (held) despicable?-(5871)

5871 *Cf.* 32:8, n. 3638. Man is ashamed of the process of physical creation, by which he comes into being. Yet he is arrogant in life and neglectful of the Future.

21. The which We placed in a place of rest, firmly fixed,(5872)

5872 See n. 2873 to 23:13. The silent growth in the mother's womb, and the protection and sustenance which the growing life receives from the life of the mother, are themselves wonders of creation.

22. For a period (of gestation), determined (according to need)?(5873)

5873 The period roughly of nine months and ten days is subject to many adjustments. In fact throughout our prenatal as well as postnatal life there are wonderful and nicely-balanced adjustments of which we are ourselves unconscious. Should we not turn in love and gratitude to Allah our Creator?

23. For We do determine (according to need); for We(5874) are the best to determine (things).

5874 Perhaps th e life in the womb, in relation to the life after birth, is an allegory for our probationary life on earth in relation to the eternal Life to come. Perhaps,

also, our state when we are buried in the tomb suggests an allegory to the life in the womb, in relation to the life in the Hereafter.

24. Ah woe, that Day! to the Rejecters of Truth!

25. Have We not made the earth (as a place) to draw together.

26. The living and the dead,(5875)

5875 What a wonderful parable! The earth is a place where death and life, decay and growth and decay, green grass, stubble, and fuel, corruption and purification jostle together—one often leading to the other. The drama which we see with our own eyes in this world should enable us to appreciate the wonders in the spiritual world where the despised and rejected receive the highest honour. Lazarus rests in Abraham's bosom, and the Pharaoh is led in chains for his arrogance and his sin.

27. And made therein mountains standing firm,(5876) lofty (in stature); and provided for you water sweet (and wholesome)?

5876 See n. 2038 to 16:15. The solid mountains are frequently referred to: *cf.* 13:3. The parable here is that the mountains are hard, solid rock, and yet they act as sponges to collect, store up, and filter sweet and wholesome water, which on account of their altitude they are able to distribute by gravity to the lower, dry land by means of rivers or springs. Anyone who has seen the parched Makkan valleys and the delicious springs in the mountains around, or the Zubaydah Canal , which is the main source of Makkah's water supply, will appreciate the aptness of the metaphor, but it applies to any country, though not to so striking a degree. If the wisdom and power of Allah can do such things before your eyes, how can you reject His teaching of a still more wonderful future Life?

28. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

29. (It will be said:) "Depart ye to that which ye used to reject as false!

30. "Depart ye to a Shadow(5877) (of smoke ascending) in three columns,

5877 The Sinners, instead of reposing in cool shades, will only see the blazing Fire. The only shadow they will see will be that of Smoke, ascending in three columns, right, left, and above, *i.e.,* completely enveloping them. But it will give no comfort or coolness. On the contrary, it will contain huge sparks. (R).

31. "(Which yields) no shade of coolness, and is of no use against the fierce Blaze.

32. "Indeed it throws about sparks (huge) as Forts,(5878)

5878 *Qasr:* Fort, big building, palace. An alternative reading is *Qasar,* plural of *Qasrat (run),* meaning bundles of wood used for fuel: Ibn 'Abbas reported by Bukhari. I almost prefer this latter reading.

33. "As if there were (a string of) yellow camels (marching swiftly)."(5879)

5879 The yellow sparks flying swiftly one after another suggest a string of camels marching swiftly, such as the Arabs of Najd and central Arabia are so proud of. There is a double allegory. It refers not only to the colour and the rapid succession of sparks, but to the vanity of worldly pride, as much as to say: "your fine yellow camels in which you took such pride in the world are but sparks that fly away and even sting you in the Hereafter!" Smoke with sparks may also assume fantastic shapes like long-necked camels.

34. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

35. That will be a Day when they shall not be able to speak.(5880)

5880 They will be dumbfounded; *i.e.,* (when read with the next verse), they will not be in a position to put forward any valid defence or plea. Facts will speak too plainly against them. They might perversely try to deny false worship: 6:23; but their own tongues and limbs will bear witness against them: 24:24. Nor does the fighting out or settling of doctrinal disputes in the Hereafter (39:31) amount to putting forward pleas in defence.

36. Nor will it be open to them to put forth pleas.

37. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

38. That will be a Day of Sorting out! We shall gather you together and those before (you)!(5881)

5881 We may suppose this as spoken primarily to the Quraysh who were plotting against the Prophet. You may use all your wisdom and that of your ancestors, but you will not be able to defeat Allah or His Plan. See next verse.

39. Now, if ye have a trick (or plot), use it against Me!(5882)

5882 The plots against the Prophet were plots against Allah's Truth, and therefore against Allah. Can anyone hope to profit by such plots? Can anyone defeat Allah's Plan and Purpose? Let them try. They will only ruin themselves, as the Pagan leaders did. There can only be pity for such men. What will be their state in the Hereafter? "Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Allah's Truth!"

40. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

41. As to the Righteous, they shall be amidst (cool) shades and springs (of water).(5883)

5883 This is in contrast to the triple shade of smoke and sin for the sinners, which neither gives them coolness nor protects them from the Blazing Fire. The Shade, *i.e.,* Covering, of Allah's Good Pleasure, will be the greatest Boon of all, and the Spring of Allah's Love will be inexhaustible. (R).

42. And (they shall have) fruits,- all they desire.(5884)

5884 *Fruits: see* n. 4671 to 43:73. (R).

43. "Eat ye and drink ye to your heart´s content: for that ye worked (Righteousness).(5885)

5885 The fruits of righteousness are contentment in this life and the supreme Bliss in the next.

44. Thus do We certainly reward the Doers of Good.

45. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

46. (O ye unjust!) Eat ye and enjoy yourselves (but) a little while,(5886) for that ye are Sinners.

5886 "Eat" is symbolical of having the good things of life in this world. It may be that they are only given for a trial. Because their minds and wishes run to wrong things, the opportunities for wrong are multiplied, as the impetus for good or for evil increases progressively. They are to believe and repent. But if they do not, they are to be pitied, even for the good things of this life, for they will come to an evil End in the Hereafter.

47. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

48. And when it is said to them, "Prostrate yourselves!" they do not so.(5887)

5887 Prostration is a symbol of humility and a desire to get nearer to Allah by Prayer and a good life. Those who refuse to adopt this Path are to be pitied: how will they fare at Judgement?

49. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

50. Then what Message, after that,(5888) will they believe in?

5888 *That* may refer to verse 48: they were given plain and clear Guidance, and they refused to accept it: after that what kind of Message will they accept? The Guidance referred to is obviously that of Islam or the Qur'an.

78. Al Naba' (The Great News)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Concerning what are they disputing?

2. Concerning the Great News,(5889)

5889 *Great News;* usually understood to mean the News or Message of the Resurrection or the Hereafter, about which there are various schools of thought among the Jews and Christians and other nations. There is practically nothing about the Resurrection in the Old Testament, and the Jewish sect of Sadducees even in the time of Christ denied the Resurrection altogether. The Pagan ideas of a future life-if any-varied from place to place and from time to time. Even in the early Christian Church, as we learn from Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, there were contentions in that little community (I. Corinthians, 1:11), and some definitely denied the resurrection of the dead *(ib.,* 15:12).

Great News may also be translated *Great Message* or a *Message Supreme* as I have translated at 38:67. In that case it would refer to the Qur'an, or the Message of Revelation, or the Message of the Prophet, about which there was great contention in those days. As this Message also lays great stress on the Day of Judgement and the Resurrection, the practical result by either mode of interpretation amounts to the same.

3. About which they cannot agree.

4. Verily, they shall soon (come to) know!

5. Verily, verily they shall soon (come to) know!

6. Have We not made the earth as a wide(5890) expanse,

5890 See n. 2038 to 16:15. *Cf.* also 13:3 and 15:19. The spacious expanse of the earth may be compared to a carpet, to which the mountains act as pegs. The Signs of Allah are thus enumerated: the great panorama of outer nature (verses 6-7); the creation of Man in pairs, with the succession of rest and work fitting in with the succession of night and day (verses 8-11); the firmaments above, with their splendid lights (verses 12-13); and the clouds and rain and abundant harvests, which knit sky and earth and man together (verses 14-16). These point to Allah, and Allah's Message points to the Future Life.

7. And the mountains as pegs?

8. And (have We not) created you in pairs,

9. And made your sleep for rest,

10. And made the night as a covering,(5891)

5891 The darkness of the night is as a covering. Just as a covering protects us from exposure to cold or heat, so this covering gives us spiritual respite from the buffets of the material world, and from the tiring activities of our own inner exertions. The rest in sleep (in verse 9) is supplemented by the covering of the night with which we are provided by Allah.

11. And made the day as a means of subsistence?(5892)

5892 *Subsistence* in English only partly covers the idea of *ma' ash,* which includes every kind of life activity. The Day is specially illuminated, so runs the figure of speech, in order that these life activities of all kinds may be fully exercised.

12. And (have We not) built over you the seven firmaments,(5893)

5893 See n. 5526 to 65:12 and n. 2876 to 23:17, also 37:6 and notes there.

13. And placed (therein) a Light of Splendour?(5894)

5894 That is, the sun. *Cf.* 25:61; 33:46 (where it is used metaphorically for the Prophet); and 71:16.

14. And do We not send down from the clouds water in abundance,(5895)

5895 Note how the evidences of Allah and His beneficence are set out in four groups. (1) Look to external nature on the earth around you (verses 6-7); (2) your own nature, physical, mental and spiritual (verses 8-11); (3) the starry heavens, and the glory of the sun (verses 12-13); and (4) the interdependence of earth, air, and sky in the cycle of water, clouds, rain, corn and gardens, all serving in their several ways to further the whole plan of the World as it affects us. Can you not then believe that a Creator who does this will sort out Good and Evil on an appointed Day with real justice and power?

15. That We may produce therewith corn and vegetables,

16. And gardens of luxurious growth?

17. Verily the Day of Sorting Out(5896) is a thing appointed,

5896 *Cf.* 37:21, n. 4047, and 36:59, n. 4005 (end). The Day of J udgement is the Day of Sorting Out, as between Good and Evil.

18. The Day that the Trumpet(5897) shall be sounded, and ye shall come forth in crowds;

5897 The angel charged with the sounding of the Trumpet is Israfil. It will herald Judgement, *Cf.* 50:20: also 39:68, and n. 4343; and 69:13, n. 5648.

19. And the heavens shall be opened as if there were doors,(5898)

5898 A sign that the present order of things will have ceased to exist, and a new world will have come into being. Such a figure applies to the heavens in this verse and to the earth in the next verse. The mystery of what is beyond the heavens will have vanished through the doors which will then be opened. The solid mountains, as we suppose them to be, will have vanished like an unsubstantial mirage.

20. And the mountains shall vanish, as if they were a mirage.

21. Truly Hell is as a place of ambush-(5899)

5899 Hell, the embodiment of evil, is lying in wait like an ambush for everyone. We should be on our guard. For the transgressors, those who have wilfully rebelled against Allah, it will be a definite destination, from which there is no return, except, it may be, after ages *i.e.,* unless Allah so wills: *Cf.* 6:128, and n. 951.

22. For the transgressors a place of destination:

23. They will dwell therein for ages.

24. Nothing cool shall they taste therein, nor any drink,

25. Save a boiling fluid and a fluid, dark, murky, intensely cold-(5900)

5900 *Cf.* 10:4, and n. 1390; also 38:57, and n. 4213.

26. A fitting recompense (for them).(5901)

5901 Their transgressions go on progressively as they refuse to repent and turn to Allah. The fire of misery begins to blaze forth more and more fiercely, and there is nothing to cool that blaze; their food and drink themselves are tainted with the disorder of contradictory elements—boiling hot drink, with intensely cold, murky, and disgusting fluids. These are fitting punishments for their crimes, which are inconsistent with the pure and gentle mould in which Allah had originally cast their nature.

27. For that they used not to fear any account (for their deeds),(5902)

5902 It was not isolated acts, but a continued course of evil conduct; they repudiated the moral and spiritual responsibility for their lives; and they impudently called Truth itself by false names and disdained Allah's Signs, which were vouchsafed for their instruction. These are not mere impressions; these are hard facts "preserved on record", so that every deed can have its due weight in making up the account.

28. But they (impudently) treated Our Signs as false.

29. And all things have We preserved on record.

30. "So taste ye (the fruits of your deeds); for no increase(5903) shall We grant you, except in Punishment."

5903 Just as there is a progressive deterioration in the sinner's soul when he surrenders himself to evil, so there is a progressive increase in the Penalty which he suffers.

31. Verily for the Righteous there will be a fulfilment of (the heart´s) desires;(5904)

5904 This is true Salvation. It is not only safety and felicity, but the attainment of the final Goal, the supreme Achievement, the Fulfilment of the highest in human nature, the satisfaction of the true and pure desires of the heart—seeing the "Face of Allah". See n. 4733 to 44:57.

32. Gardens enclosed, and Grapevines;(5905)

5905 The supreme Achievement, or the Fulfilment of the Heart's Desires, spoken of in the last verse, is now described in three symbols (verses 32-34), as further explained by two negatives (verse 35). The first symbol is the enclosed Fruit Garden , and the symbol taken for the fruit is the Grape. The Garden in its many aspects is the most frequent symbol adopted for Bliss. Here the symbolism is further particularised. The most carefully-tended Garden is a Fruit Garden , with walls all round to protect it, and the most characteristic fruit mentioned here is the luscious Grape. (R).

33. Companions of Equal Age;(5906)

5906 The second symbol is Companions of Equal Age. Maidens or Virgins, symbols of purity, grace, beauty, innocence, truth, and sympathy. (R).

34. And a cup full (To the Brim).(5907)

5907 The third symbol, the Cup, takes us pardy to the Grapes mentioned in verse 32 and partly to the Springs or Rivers mentioned with the Garden in so many places. *Full to the brim* brings to our mind the unbounded Bounty of Allah.

35. No vanity shall they hear therein, nor Untruth:-(5908)

5908 The explanation of the three symbols is made further clear by the two negatives. (1) There will be no talk of vanities, such as are usually associated on this earth with pleasant Gardens, Companions of equal age, or generous Cups flowing in Assemblies. (2) There will be no Untruth or Falsehood. Insincerity or Hollowness there. Everything will be on a plane of absolute Truth and Realty.

36. Recompense from thy Lord, a gift, (amply) sufficient-(5909)

5909 The Recompense is not exactly a Reward in proportion to merit, but is rather a Gift or a Bounty from the Merciful | a Gift most amply sufficient to satisfy all desire on that plane of purity. *A Gift (amply) sufficient* might almost be translated: a liberal and bountiful gift. *Cf.* the phrase, *A'ta fa ahsana=he* gave generously, or bountifully. (R).

37. (From) the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and all between, (Allah) Most Gracious: None shall have power to argue with Him.(5910)

5910 No one has the right or the power to argue with Allah about the Gifts which He may bestow on His devotees beyond their deserts, (verse 36 above) or about the Penalty which His justice may inflict for sin or wrongdoing. He is high above all Creation. But He is also Most Gracious. Therefore He may permit special Dignitaries, of honour in His eyes, to plead for sinners, but they will only plead in truth and righteousness: see verse 38 below.

38. The Day that the Spirit(5911) and the angels will stand forth in ranks, none shall speak except any who is permitted by ((Allah)) Most Gracious, and He will say what is right.(5912)

5911 *The Spirit:* see n. 5677 to 70:4. Some Commentators understand by "the Spirit" the angel Gabriel as he is charged specially with bringing Messages to human prophets: see 26:193. n. 3224. (R).

5912 See n. 5910 above. No one has the right to speak before the Judgement Seat; but certain great Dignitaries may be given permission to plead for mercy for sinners, and they will only so plead if the mercy is not negatory of Allah's universal justice.

39. That Day will be the sure Reality:(5913) Therefore, whoso will, let him take a (straight) return to his Lord!

5913 *Cf.* 69:1 and n. 5635. Judgement is sure to come, and Truth will then be free from all veils. Why should not man, therefore, now in this life of probation, turn back to Allah, and understand and do His Will?

40. Verily, We have warned you of a Penalty near-(5914) the Day when man will see (the deeds) which his hands have sent forth, and the Unbeliever will say, "Woe unto me! Would that I were (metre) dust!"(5915)

5914 Is Judgement very near? Yes. There are three stages of Judgement (1) Many of our sins and wrongdoings find their penalty in this very life. It may not be an open or striking event, but it corrodes the soul and conscience all the time. Let us therefore turn back to Allah in repentance and ask for forgiveness (2) Where the Penalty is not actually perceived or is not visible in this life, Death is considered the Lesser Judgement for each individual soul: see n. 5822 to 75:22. Death may come to anyone at any time, and we must all be ready for it. (3) Then there is the final Judgement, when the whole of the present order passes away, and there is a New World . Time as we know it will not exist. Fifty thousand years as we reckon now will be but as a Day; 70:4. According to those standards even this Final Judgement is quite near, and we must prepare for it. For it will be too late then for repentance.

5915 The Unbeliever, the Rejecter of Allah, will then find himself in a world of absolute Reality, in which there will be no place for him. He will neither live nor die: 20:74. He will wish that he could be reduced to nothingness, but even that would not be possible.

79. Al Nazi'at (Those Who Tear Out)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the (angels)(5916) who tear out (the souls of the wicked) with violence;(5917)

5916 The beginning of this Surah may be compared with the beginning of S. 77. A translator's task in such passages is extremely difficult. He has to contend, again and again, with verities of a realm beyond man's normal range of experience expressed in elliptical language and he has to render them in another language with words of precision intelligible to readers. It is therefore necessary for him to put in part of the Commentary in the Translation in such cases. (R).

The evidence of five things is here invoked in verses 1-5, in order to lead to the conclusion in verse 6 and those following. Or, if we treat verses 3-5 as three stages of the same thing, there are three things to be considered in five stages. What are they? And what is the conclusion? See the following notes.

5917 There is much difference of opinion among the Commentators as to the five things or beings mentioned in these verses. I follow the general opinion in my interpretation, which is that angels are referred to as the agency which in their dealings with mankind show clearly Allah's Justice, Power, and Mercy, which again point to the Judgement to come, as a certainty which none can evade. The first point, referred to in this verse, is that the souls of the wicked are loath to part with their material body at death, but their will will not count: their souls will be wrenched out into another world. Who will then deny Resurrection and Judgement?

2. By those who gently draw out (the souls of the blessed);(5918)

5918 The second point is that in contrast with the wicked, the souls of the blessed will be drawn out gently to their new life. They will be ready for it. In fact death for them will be a release from the grosser incidents of bodily sense. To them the approach of Judgement will be welcome.

3. And by those who glide along (on errands of mercy),(5919)

5919 At all times are errands of mercy and blessings and errands of justice, which the angels are prompt to execute by order of Allah. There are three features of this, thus giving the third, fourth, and fifth points. (3) Their movement is compared to that of gliding or swimming *(sabhan)*. In 21:33 this verb is applied to the motion of the celestial bodies: they all "swim along, each in its rounded course". *Cf.* Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice :* "There's not an orb which thou behold'st, But in his motion life and angel sings, Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims". (4) In hurrying on their errands angels press forth as in a race. (5) And thus they promptly execute the orders of their Lord *(Cf.* 35:1).

4. Then press forward as in a race,

5. Then arrange to do (the Commands of their Lord),

6. One Day everything that can be in commotion will be in violent commotion,(5920)

5920 The evidence of the wonderful working of the spiritual world having been invoked in the first five verses, the conclusion is now drawn and stated. It is certain that one great Day (to be taken in a spiritual sense as the Day of Account), the whole world as we now see it in our life will be in violent revolution. It will be like an earthquake destroying all landmarks. But that will affect only things subject to change: they will suffer violent convulsions as a preliminary to their disappearance. But Allah and His divine order will not change: his "Face" abideth forever, full of Majesty, Bounty, and Honour (55:27).

7. Followed by oft-repeated (Commotions):(5921)

5921 The Commotion will be repeated again and again in the transitory world, to make way for the new world that will then come into being.

8. Hearts that Day(5922) will be in agitation;

5922 All hearts will be in agitation: those of the blessed ones to see the beginning of the fulfilment of their Lord's Promise; those of the Rejecters of Allah for fear of His just Judgement.

9. Cast down will be(5923) (their owners´) eyes.

5923 Similarly all eyes will be cast down: those of the blessed ones to see the beginning of the fulfilment of the Rejecters of Allah, in utter humiliation, sorrow, and shame, for their arrogance and insolence in their probationary life.

10. They say (now): "What! shall we indeed be(5924) returned to (our) former state?

5924 The Unbelievers say now, in their arrogance, insolence, and mocking defiance: "Surely death here is the end of all things! When we are dead and buried, and our bones are rotten, how can we be restored again?" They add, "If that were so, then we should indeed be in a turn of dreadful luck! Instead of gaining by the Resurrection, we should be in terrible loss (with our rotten bones)!" They mean this in biting mockery. But there will indeed be an Account taken, and they will indeed be in a terrible loss, for they will go to perdition!

11. "What! - when we shall have become rotten bones?"

12. They say: "It would, in that case, be a return with loss!"

13. But verily, it will be but a single (Compelling) Cry,(5925)

5925 Judgement will be inaugurated with a single compelling Cry. *Cf.* 37:19. See also 36:29 and 49, where the single mighty Blast seems to refer to the sinners being cut off in this life and plunged into the other world where they will be further judged, and 36:53, where the final Judgement is referred to.

14. When, behold, they will be in the (full) awakening (to Judgment).(5926)

5926 They will have been more or less dormant before the Great Judgement, as contrasted with the Lesser Judgement (n. 5914 to 78:40, and n. 5822 to 75:22). When the resurrection comes, they will come fully into the new world, the old heaven and earth having then completely passed away, not only for them but absolutely.

15. Has the story(5927) of Moses reached thee?

5927 This is just a reference to the story of Moses told more fully in S. 20:9-76. The lessons drawn are: (1) That even to an arrogant blasphemer and rebel against Allah's Law, like Pharaoh, Allah's grace was offered through a major prophet Moses; (2) that this rejection brought about his signal downfall even in this world; and (3) that his humiliation and punishment will be completed in the Hereafter at Judgement.

16. Behold, thy Lord did call to him in the sacred valley of Tuwa:-(5928)

5928 *Cf.* 20:12.

17. "Go thou to Pharaoh for he has indeed transgressed all bounds:(5929)

5929 *Cf.* 20:24.

18. "And say to him, ´Wouldst thou that thou shouldst be purified (from sin)?-

19. "´And that I guide thee to thy Lord, so thou(5930) shouldst fear Him?´"

5930 Even for such a one as Pharaoh, intoxicated with his own power and greatness, guidance and grace were offered through Moses.

20. Then did (Moses) show him the Great Sign.(5931)

5931 What was the Great Sign? Some Commentators understand by it the "White Shining Hand": see n. 2550 to 20:22-23. Others think it was the miracle of the rod

that became a "snake active in motion": see 20:20, n. 2549. These were among the Greater Signs: 20:23. In 17:101 there is a reference to nine clear Signs given to Moses, and these are specified in detail in n. 1091 to 7:133. the fact is, there were many Signs given, "openly self-explained," but Pharaoh and his men "were steeped in arrogance-a people given to sin" (7:133). the pre-eminently Great Sign was therefore the fact of Moses being sent to Pharaoh, which subsequently converted the magicians and the more learned Egyptians to the true God (20:70-73), though Pharaoh and his Chiefs resisted and suffered for their sins. (R).

21. But (Pharaoh) rejected it and disobeyed (guidance);

22. Further, he turned his back, striving hard (against Allah..

23. Then he collected (his men) and made a proclamation,

24. Saying, "I am your Lord, Most High".

25. But Allah did punish him, (and made an) example of him, - in the Hereafter, as in this life.(5932)

5932 See 20:78-79, also 7:135-137.

26. Verily in this is an instructive warning(5933) for whosoever feareth ((Allah)).

5933 *Cf.* 24:44.

27. What! Are ye the more difficult to create or the heaven (above)?(5934) (Allah) hath constructed it:

5934 If man grows arrogant or forgets his accountability to Allah, in his ignorance or thoughtlessness, he is reminded that he is only an insignificant speck in Allah's spacious Creation *(Cf.* 36:81). All the excellence that man acquires is the gift of Allah, Who had bestowed on him a high Destiny if he fulfils the purpose of his creation: 2:30-39. Then follows a nature passage, pointing to the glory of the heavens and the earth, and how they are both made to subserve the life of man.

28. On high hath He raised its canopy, and He hath given it order and perfection.(5935)

5935 *Cf.* 2:29. The mystery of the heavens with their countless stars and the planets obeying the laws of motion, and the sun and moon influencing the temperature and climates of the earth from thousands or millions of miles, illustrate the order and perfection which Allah has given to His Creation. Can man then remain exempt from his responsibility for his deeds, endowed as he is with a will, or deny the Day of Sorting Out, which is the Day of Judgement?

29. Its night doth He endow with darkness, and its splendour doth He bring out (with light).(5936)

5936 *Its* of course refers to the starry heaven. Both the Night and the Day have each its own beauty and its utility for man, as has been frequently pointed out in the Qur'an. The night is a period of darkness, but it has also its splendours of light in the moon, or the planets Jupiter or Venus, or stars like Sirius or the Milky Way. These countless lights of night have their own beauty, and by day there is splendour of the sun for us, which in Creation as a whole, is just one of countless stars.

30. And the earth, moreover,(5937) hath He extended (to a wide expanse);

5937 *Moreover:* or, more literally, *after that.* See n. 4475 to 41:11.

31. He draweth out therefrom its moisture and its pasture;(5938)

5938 The underground springs and wells as well as rivers and glaciers in northern climates are due to the different levels of highlands not lowlands. They spread the moisture evenly as wanted, and give corn, fruits, and vegetables to man, and pastures and feeding grounds to beasts of the fields. For the wonderful circuit or cycle of water between heaven and earth, see notes 3106 (25:49) and 3111 (25:53).

32. And the mountains hath He firmly fixed;-(5939)

5939 See n. 2038 to 16:15. the "eternal hills" are the main reservoirs for the storage and gradual distribution of water, the very basis of the life of man and beast.

33. For use and convenience(5940) to you and your cattle.

5940 This clause I construe to apply to verses 30, 31, and 32 above. Everything on earth as, by Allah's bountiful providence, been arranged to subserve the use and convenience of man and the lower life which depends upon him. The intermediary between Allah's providence and the actual use made for Allah's other gifts is man's own intelligence and initiative, which are also gifts of Allah.

34. Therefore, when there comes the great, overwhelming (Event),-(5941)

5941 The Judgement, the time for sorting out all things according to their true, intrinsic, and eternal values.

35. The Day when man shall remember (all) that he strove for,(5942)

5942 The Judgement will be not only for his acts but for his motives, "all he strove for", In this life he may forget his ill-deeds, but in the new conditions he will not only remember them, but the Fire of Punishment will be plainly visible to him, and not only to him, but it will be "for all to see". This will add to the sinner's humiliation.

36. And Hell-Fire shall be placed in full view(5943) for (all) to see,-

5943 *Cf.* 26:91.

37. Then, for such as had transgressed all bounds,

38. And had preferred(5944) the life of this world,

5944 The abiding Punishment will be for those who had willfully and persistently rebelled against Allah, "transgressing all bounds", and had given themselves up to the vanities and lusts of this lower life. This Punishment will not touch those who had repented and been forgiven, nor those guilty, through human frailty, of minor sins, whose deeds will be weighed in the balance against their good deeds: 101:6-9.

39. The Abode will be Hell-Fire;

40. And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before(5945) their Lord´s (tribunal) and had restrained (their) soul from lower desires,

5945 The contrast is complete and parallel: the persistent rebels against Allah's Law, who preferred the lower life, are to dwell in the Fire of Punishment, while those who humbly feared the punishment of sin and believing in their Lord's warnings restrained their lower desires, will dwell in the Garden. See last note.

41. Their abode will be the Garden.

42. They ask thee(5946) about the Hour,-´When will be its appointed time?

5946 *Cf.* 7:187 and n. 1159. Only Allah can reveal it. But were it known, "heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth".

43. Wherein art thou (concerned) with the declaration thereof?

44. With thy Lord in the Limit(5947) fixed therefor.

5947 Our time has no sort of comparison with the timeless state in the new spiritual World in which the final Judgement will take place. Nor can its limits—how long it will last—be set except in fhe Will of Almighty Allah, Lord of Supreme Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness: 11:107-108. But it is near, in the sense explained in n. 5914 to 78:40.

45. Thou art but a Warner for such as fear it.(5948)

5948 The warning is only effective for those who believe in Allah and in the Final Account. Such men immediately turn in repentance to Allah, and it is to lead such men and help them, that Prophets are sent.

46. The Day they see it, (It will be) as if they had tarried but a single evening, or (at most till) the following morn!(5949)

5949 *Cf.* 10:45, where the expression used is: "it will be as if they had tarried but an hour of a day." Here the metaphor used is "a single evening, or at most, 'till the following morn". Death is like sleep, and may be compared to the evening of life. In sleep we do not know how the time passes. When we wake up from the sleep of Death at the Resurrection, we shall not know whether it was the following moment or the following hour after we slept, but we shall feel that it is morning, for we shall be conscious of all that goes on, as one awakened in the morning.



80. 'Abasa (He Frowned)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. (The Prophet) frowned and turned away,(5950)

5950 See the Introduction to this Surah for the incident to which this refers. The lesson is that neither spiritual worth nor the prospect of effective spiritual guidance is to be measured by a man's position in life. The poor, or the blind, the halt, or the maimed, may be more susceptible to the teaching of Allah's Word than men who are apparently gifted, but who suffer from arrogance and self-sufficiency.

2. Because there came to him the blind man (interrupting).

3. But what could tell thee but that perchance he might grow (in spiritual understanding)?-

4. Or that he might receive admonition, and the teaching might profit him?(5951)

5951 It may be that the poor blind man might, on account of his will to learn, be more likely to grow in his own spiritual development or to profit by any lessons taught to him even in reproof than a self-sufficient leader. In fact it was so. For the blind man became a true and sincere Muslim and lived to become a governor of Madinah.

5. As to one who regards Himself as self-sufficient,(5952)

5952 Such a one would be a Pagan Quraysh leader, whom the Prophet was anxious to get into his fold, in order that the work of preaching Allah's Message might be facilitated. But such a Message works first amongst the simple and lowly, the poor and despised folk, and the mighty ones of the earth only come in when the stream rushes in with irresistible force.

6. To him dost thou attend;

7. Though it is no blame to thee if he grow not(5953) (in spiritual understanding).

5953 Allah's Message is for all, but if the great ones arrogantly keep back from it, it is no fault of the Preacher, so long as he has proclaimed the Message. He should attend to all, and specially to *the* humble and lowly.

8. But as to him who came to thee striving earnestly,

9. And with fear (in his heart),(5954)

5954 The fear in the blind man's heart may have been twofold. (1) He was humble and God-fearing, not arrogant and self-sufficient: (2) being poor and blind, he feared to intrude: yet his earnest desire to learn the Qur'an made him bold, and he came, perhaps unseasonably, but was yet worthy of encouragement, because of the purity of his heart.

10. Of him wast thou unmindful.

11. By no means (should it be so)! For it is indeed a Message of instruction:(5955)

5955 Allah's Message is a universal Message, from which no one is to be excluded-rich or poor, old or young, great or lowly, learned or ignorant. If anyone had the spiritual craving that needed satisfaction, he was to be given precedence if there was to be any question of precedence at all.

12. Therefore let whoso will, keep it in remembrance.

13. (It(5956) is) in Books held (greatly) in honour,

5956 At the time this Surah was revealed, there were perhaps only about 42 or 45 Surahs in the hands of the Muslims. But it was a sufficient body of Revelation of high spiritual value, to which the description given here could be applied. It was held in the highest honour; its place in the hearts of Muslims was more exalted than that of anything else: as Allah's Word, it was pure and sacred; and those who transcribed it were men who were honourable, just and pious. The legend that the early Surahs were not carefully written down and preserved in books is a pure invention. The recensions made later in the time of the first and the third Khalifahs were merely to preserve the purity and safeguard the arrangement of the text at a time when the expansion of Islam among non-Arabic-speaking peoples made such precautions necessary.

14. Exalted (in dignity), kept pure and holy,

15. (Written) by the hands of scribes-

16. Honourable and Pious and Just.

17. Woe to man! What hath made him reject Allah.

18. From what stuff hath He created him?

19. From a sperm-drop:(5957) He hath created him, and then mouldeth him in due proportions;

5957 *Cf.* 76:2, and n. 5832. The origin of man as an animal is lowly indeed. But what further faculties and capacities has not Allah granted to men? Besides his animal body, in which also he shares in all the blessings which Allah has bestowed on the rest of His Creation, man has been granted divine gifts which entitle him to be called Vicegerent of Allah on earth: 2:30. He has a will; he has spiritual perception; he is capable of divine love; he can control nature within certain limits, and subject nature's forces to his own use. And he has been given the power of judgement, so that he can avoid excess and defect, and follow the middle path. And that path, as well as all that is necessary for his life in its manifold aspects, has been made easy for him.

20. Then doth He make His path smooth for him;

21. Then He causeth him to die, and putteth him in his Grave;(5958)

5958 *Cf.* 20:55. Death is an inevitable event after the brief life on this earth, but it is also in a sense a blessing-a release from the imperfections of this world, a close of the probationary period, after which will dawn the full Reality. *The Grave* may be understood to be the period between physical death and immortal Life, whatever may be the mode of disposal of the dead body. This intermediate period is the *Barzakh* or Partition: see n. 2940 to 23:101.

22. Then, when it is His Will, He will raise him up (again).

23. By no means hath he fulfilled what Allah hath commanded him.(5959)

5959 Though all these blessings and stages have been provided by Allah's Grace for the good of man, yet unregenerate man fails in carrying out the purpose of his creation and life.

24. Then let man look at his Food,(5960) (and how We provide it):

5960 After a reference to man's inner history, there is now a reference to just one item in his daily outer life, his food: and it is shown how the forces of heaven and earth unite by Allah's Command to serve man and his dependants, "for use and convenience to you and your cattle" (verse 32 below). If that is the case with just one item, food, how much more comprehensive is Allah's beneficence when the whole of man's needs are considered!

25. For that We pour forth water in abundance,

26. And We split the earth in fragments,(5961)

5961 The water comes from the clouds in plentiful abundance; the earth is ploughed, and the soil is broken up in fragments, and yields an abundant harvest of cereals (Corn), trellised fruit (Grapes), and vegetable food (nutritious Plants), as well as fruit that can keep for long periods and serve many uses, like olives and dates.

27. And produce therein(5962) corn,

5962 *Therein: i.e.,* from within the earth or the soil.

28. And Grapes and nutritious plants,

29. And Olives and Dates,

30. And enclosed Gardens,(5963) dense with lofty trees,

5963 We not only get field crops such as were mentioned in n. 5961 above, but we have the more highly cultivated garden crops, both in the way of lofty trees, and in the way of carefully tended fruits like the fig; and then we have grass and all kinds of fodder.

31. And fruits and fodder,-

32. For use and convenience to you and your cattle.(5964)

5964 The same verse occurs at 79:33, where n. 5940 explains the wider meaning in that context.

33. At length, when there comes the Deafening Noise,-(5965)

5965 Preliminary to the establishment of the Final Judgement.

34. That Day shall a man flee from his own brother,

35. And from his mother and his father,

36. And from his wife and his children.(5966)

5966 Even those who were nearest and dearest in this life will not be able or willing to help each other on that awful Day. On the contrary, if they have to receive a sentence for their sins, they will be anxious to avoid even sharing each other's sorrows or witnessing each other's humiliation; for each will have enough of his own troubles to occupy him. On the other hand, the Righteous will be united with their righteous families: 52:21; and their faces will be "beaming, laughing, rejoicing" (80:38-39).

37. Each one of them, that Day, will have enough concern (of his own) to make him indifferent to the others.(5967)

5967 *Cf.* 70:10-14. No friend will ask after a friend that Day. On the contrary the sinner will desire to save himself at the expense even of his own family and benefactors.

38. Some faces that Day will be beaming,

39. Laughing, rejoicing.

40. And other faces that Day will be dust-stained,(5968)

5968 The dust on the faces of the sinners will be in contrast to the beaming light on the faces of the righteous; and the blackness in contrast to the "laughing, rejoicing" faces of the righteous. But the dust also suggests that being Rejecters of Allah, their faces and eyes and faculties were choked in dust, and the blackness suggests that being Doers of Iniquity they had no part or lot in purity or Light. Another contrast may possibly be deduced: the humble and lowly may be "in the dust" in this life, and the arrogant sinners in sunshine, but the roles will be reversed at Judgement.

41. Blackness will cover them:

42. Such will be the Rejecters of Allah, the doers of iniquity.

81. Al Takwir (The Folding Up)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. When the sun(5969) (with its spacious light) is folded up;(5970)

5969 Verses 1 to 13 are conditional clauses, and the substantive clause is in verse 14. The time will come when nature's processes as we know them will cease to function, and the soul will only then know by self-conviction the results of its actions. With reference to an individual soul, its resurrection is its supreme crisis: the whole world of sense, and even of imagination and reason, melts away, and its whole spiritual scroll is laid bare before it.

5970 The conditional clauses are twelve, in two groups of six. The first six affect the outer or physical life of man; the last six, his inmost spiritual life. Let us take them one by one. (1) The biggest factor affecting us in the external physical World is the light, heat, and perhaps electric or magnetic energy of the sun. The sun is the source of all the light, heat, and energy, and indeed the source and support of all physical life that we know. It is the biggest factor and yet most remote from us in our solar system. Yet the sources of our inner spiritual life will be greater and more lasting, for they will survive it. The sun as the centre of our solar system also stands as a symbol of the present order of things. The physical forces, as defined in Newton 's laws of Matter and Attraction, will also break up with the break-up of the sun. *Is folded up:* is folded up, or twisted up, like a sheet or garment.

2. When the stars(5971) fall, losing their lustre;

5971 (2) Next after the sun, we can derive faint lights from the innumerable stars in the firmament. For all the ages of which we have any record, these stars have remained fixed. Nothing can be more fixed: yet they can and will fail.

3. When the mountains vanish (like a mirage);(5972)

5972 *Cf.* 78:20. (3) On our own earth the mountains-the "eternal hills'-seem the most striking examples of stability; yet they will be swept away like a mirage, as if they had never existed.

4. When the she-camels, ten months with young, are left untended;(5973)

5973 (4) The type of Arab property, as well as the type of the Arab pet, was the camel, and the most precious camel was the she-camel just about to be delivered of her young. She would in normal times be most sedulously cared for. But when all our landmarks of this life vanish, even she would be left untended. Nothing would then be as it is now.

5. When the wild beasts are herded together (in the human habitations);(5974)

5974 (5) In the present world, the wild animals fear each other, and they all fear man and normally keep away from human habitations. But when this order passes away, there will be scarcely any differentiation between human habitations and the wilds of the forests.

6. When the oceans(5975) boil over with a swell;

5975 See 52:6 and n. 5041. (6) The oceans, which now keep their bounds, will surge and boil over, and overwhelm all landmarks. At present the waters seem to have reached their fixed and normal levels, but the whole equilibrium will then be disturbed. Such will be the complete wreck of this transitory world, at the approach of the dawn of the permanent Reality. But these are physical symbols, relating to the outer nature surrounding the physical nature of man. The remaining six, *viz.:* the 7th to the 12th, describe the ordering of the new spiritual World, from which all present seeming incongruities will be removed.

7. When the souls are sorted out,(5976) (being joined, like with like);

5976 *Cf.* 56:7, where the sorting out into three classes is mentioned, *viz.:* Those Nearest to Allah, the Companions of the Right Hand, and the Companions of the Left Hand. That was a sort of broad general division. The meaning in this passage is wider. (7) Whereas in this world of probation, good is mixed with evil, knowledge with ignorance, power with arrogance, and so on-in the new world of Reality, all true values will be restored, and like will consort with like, for it will be a world of perfect Peace, Harmony, and Justice.

8. When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned -

9. For what crime she was killed;(5977)

5977 (8) In this world of sin and sorrow, much unjust suffering is caused, and innocent lives sacrificed, without a trace being left, by which offenders can be brought to justice. A striking example before the Quraysh was female infanticide: *cf.* 16:58-59, and n. 2084. The crime was committed in the guise of social plausibility in secret collusion, and no question was asked here. But in the spiritual world of Justice, full questions will be asked, and the victim herself-dumb here-will be able to give evidence, for she had committed no crime herself. The proofs will be drawn from the very means used for concealment.

10. When the scrolls are laid open;(5978)

5978 (9) The Scrolls recording the deeds of men, good or bad, will then be laid open before all. *Cf.* 50:17-18, n. 4954; also 82:11-12. In the present phenomenal world, things may be concealed; but in the spiritual world of absolute Reality, every secret is opened out, good or bad. The whole tale of acts, omissions, motives, imponderable spiritual hurt, neglect, or help will be laid bare.

11. When the world on High(5979) is unveiled;

5979 *The World on High:* literally, the Sky, or Heaven as standing for both the Blazing Fire and the Garden, the Home of the Hereafter. (10) The soul's spiritual Sky-the things it held high or sacred-will be stripped of the thin blue that gave rest-and partly illusion-to its spiritual eye in the world of illusions. Just as when an animal is skinned, its real flesh and blood and inner organs become visible, without any outer coating to hold them together, so the inmost state of the spiritual world will then become plain.

12. When the Blazing Fire(5980) is kindled to fierce heat;

5980 (11) Then will burn the *Blazing Fire of the Hell,* worse than the fiercest fire. (R).

13. And when the Garden(5981) is brought near;-(5982)

5981 (12) The last of the Metaphors, the Garden of Bliss-the Light of Allah's Face (92:20)-will come in sight-not yet attained, but visible, or "brought near". For the scales have fallen from the eyes, and the soul knows itself.

5982 See 75:22, n. 5822; 78:40, n. 5914; and 79:14, n. 5926. [Eds.].

14. (Then) shall each soul know what it has put forward.(5983)

5983 This is the conclusion. It is only on such conditions that the soul reaches its full realisation. *Put forward: cf.* "the Deeds which his hands have sent forth" in 78:40.

15. So verily I call(5984) to witness the Planets -(5985) that recede,

5984 *Cf.* 56:75, n. 5258, for the witness that the heavenly bodies bear symbolically to the power, beauty, and goodness of Allah, in sending His Revelation. See n. 5798 to 74:32, for the significance of an adjuration in the Qur'an.

5985 The appeal here is made to three things, the Planets, the Night, and the Dawn. (1) The Planets have a retrograde and a forward motion, and during occultation, hide or disappear behind the sun or moon, or are otherwise invisible or appear stationary. They behave differently from the millions of stars around them. Yet they are not mere erratic bodies, but obey definite laws, and evidence the power and wisdom of Allah.

16. Go straight, or hide;

17. And the Night as it dissipates;(5986)

5986 How the Night gradually declines after its height at midnight! It seems gradually to steal away, and as Dawn approaches, to merge into Day. So a soul in spiritual darkness gradually awakes to its spiritual Dawn through Revelation.

18. And the Dawn as it breathes away the darkness;- (5987)

5987 The slow "breathing out" of the darkness by the Dawn, shown us, by beautiful imagery, that these mysterious operations, of which people in their ignorance are frightened if they have to do with darkness, are really beneficent operations of Allah. They have nothing to do with evil spirits, or witches, or magic. For three questions were actually raised about the Prophet's Ministry by the ignorant (1) Did his wonderful works come from himself and not from Allah? (2) Was he possessed of an evil spirit? In other words, was he mad? For that was the theory of madness, then current. (3) Was he a soothsayer, or necromancer, or magician? For he had virtues, powers, and eloquence, so extraordinary that they could not understand him.

19. Verily this is the word of a most honourable Messenger,(5988)

5988 They are told here that all their three theories were foolish. The Revelation was really from Allah. Their wonder should cease if they observe the daily miracles worked round them in nature. The bringer of Allah's Message was the angel Gabriel, and not an evil spirit.

20. Endued with Power, with rank before the Lord of the Throne,(5989)

5989 Not only was the bringer of the Revelation. Gabriel, an honourable Messenger, incapable of deceit, but he had, in the angelic kingdom, rank and authority before Allah's Throne, and he could convey an authoritative divine Message. He was, like the Prophet, faithful to his trust; and therefore there could be no question of the Message being delivered in any other way than exactly according to the divine Will and Purpose. These epithets could apply to the Prophet himself, but in view of verse 23 below, it is best to understand them of Gabriel.

21. With authority there, (and) faithful to his trust.

22. And (O people!) your companion is not one possessed;(5990)

5990 After describing the credentials of the Archangel Gabriel, the Text now appeals to the people to consider their own "Companion", the Prophet, who had been born among them and had lived with them, and was known to be an honourable, truthful, and trustworthy man. If Gabriel was the one who brought the Message to him, then there was no question of demoniacal possession. And the Prophet had seen him in his inspired vision "in the clear horizon".

23. And without doubt he saw him in the clear horizon.(5991)

5991 Read along with this the whole passage in 53:1-18 and notes there; specially n. 5092, where the two occasions are mentioned when there was a vision of inspiration: "For truly did he see, of the Signs of his Lord, the Greatest" (53:18).

24. Neither doth he withhold grudgingly a knowledge of the Unseen.(5992)

5992 Such would be the words of a soothsayer, guarded, ambiguous, and misleading. Here everything was clear, sane, true, and under divine inspiration.

25. Nor is it the word of an evil spirit accursed.(5993)

5993 Such as evil suggestions of envy, spite, greed, selfishness, or other vices. On the contrary, the teaching of the Qur'an is beneficent, pointing to the Right Way , and Way of Allah. *Rajim:* literally, driven away with stones, rejected with complete ignominy. *Cf.* 15:17. The rite of throwing stones in the valley of Mina at the close of the Makkan Pilgrimage [see n. 217 (6) to 2:197] suggests symbolically that the Pilgrim emphatically, definitely, and finally rejects all Evil.

26. When whither go ye?(5994)

5994 It has been shown that this is no word of a mortal, but that it is full of divine wisdom: that its teaching is not that of a madman, but sane to the core and in accordance with human needs: that it freely and clearly directs you to the right Path and forbids you the Path of evil. Why then hesitate? Accept the divine Grace; repent of your sins; and come to the higher Life.

27. Verily this is no less than a Message to (all) the Worlds:(5995)

5995 It is not meant for one class or race; it is universal, and is addressed to all the Worlds. For the meaning of "Worlds", see n. 20 to 1:2.

28. (With profit) to whoever among you wills to go straight:(5996)

5996 *Cf.* 74:55-56. Allah is the Cherisher of the Worlds, Lord of Grace and Mercy, and His guidance is open to all who have the will to profit by it. But that will must be exercised in conformity with Allah's Will (verse 29). Such conformity is Islam. Verse 28 points to human free will and responsibility; verse 29 to its limitations. Both extremes, *viz.:* cast-iron Determination and an ides of chaotic Free Will, are condemned.

29. But ye shall not will except as Allah wills,- the Cherisher of the Worlds.



82. Al Infitar (The Cleaving Asunder)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. When(5997) the Sky is cleft asunder;(5998)

5997 *Cf.* the passage 81:1-14 and notes. For the three parallel interpretations, see the Introduction to this Surah. There are four conditional clauses here, and the substantive clause is in verse 5. In S. 81. there were 12 conditional clauses, and the conclusion was similar, but not expressed in precisely the same terms. See 72:5, n. 6002 below. The physical world as we see it now will be destroyed before the final Day of Judgement, establishing the true spiritual Reality. In the following four clauses we have a reference to the Lesser Judgement, the individual dawn of the true Reality at Death. (R).

5998 *Cf.* 73:18, n. 5869. The beautiful blue sky overhead, which we take for granted in sunshine and storm, will be shattered to pieces before the New World is established. The partition which seems at present to divide things divine from the phenomenal world has to be shattered before each soul knows the reality about itself. (R).

2. When the Stars are scattered;(5999)

5999 *Cf.* 81:2, where the word for "stars" *(Nujum)* is different, and the verb is different. *Najm* has reference to brightness, and the verb "losing their lustre" was appropriate there, to show the opposite. *Kawkab* (used here) has more the meaning of a star as fixed in a constellation; and the opposite of a fixed and definite order is "scattered", the verb used here. In fact, throughout this passage, the dominating idea is the disturbance of order and symmetry. The metaphor behind the scattering of the constellations is that in the present order of things we

see many things associated together, *e.g.,* rank with honour, wealth with comfort, etc. In the New World this will be seen to have been merely fortuitous. (R).

3. When the Oceans are suffered to burst forth;(6000)

6000 *Cf.* 81:6, "when the oceans boil over with a swell". Here, "are suffered to burst forth" expresses the end of the present order of things. This may be in two ways: (1) The barrier, which keeps within their respective bounds the various streams of salt and fresh water (55:20, n. 5185), will be removed; (2) the Ocean will overwhelm the whole Globe. (R).

4. And when the Graves are turned upside down;-(6001)

6001 This item is not mentioned in 81:1-14. Here it is introduced to show that the whole order of things will be so reversed that even Death will not be Death. We think there is tranquillity in Death, but there will be no tranquillity. Literally, and figuratively, Death will be the beginning of a new Life. What we think to be Death will bring forth Life.

5. (Then) shall each soul know what it hath sent forward(6002) and (what it hath) kept back.

6002 *Sent Forward and kept back:* may mean: the deeds of commission and omission in this life. Or the Arabic words may also be translated: *sent forward and left behind: i.e.,* the spiritual possibilities which it sent forward for its other life, and the physical things on which it prided itself in this life, but which it had to leave behind in this life. Or else, the things it put first and the things it put last in importance may change places in the new world of Reality. "The first shall be last and the last shall be first".

6. O man! What has seduced thee from thy Lord Most Beneficent?-

7. Him Who created thee. Fashioned thee in due proportion,(6003) and gave thee a just bias;(6004)

6003 *Cf.* 15:29. Allah not only created man. but fashioned him in due proportions, giving him extraordinary capacities, and the means wherewith he can fulfil his high destiny.

6004 See n. 834 to 6:1. Having given a limited free will, He gave us a just bias through our reason and our spiritual faculties. If we err, it is our will that is at fault.

8. In whatever Form(6005) He wills, does He put thee together.

6005 *(Cf.* 7:11). By "Form" *(Surah) here* I understand the general shape of things in which any given personality is placed, including his physical and social environments, his gifts of mind and spirit, and all that goes to make up his outer and inner life. The Grace of Allah is shown in all these things, for His Will is formed from perfect knowledge, wisdom, and goodness.

9. Day! nit ye do reject Right and Judgment!(6006)

6006 The goodness and mercies of Allah, and His constant watchful care of all His creatures should make men grateful, instead of which they turn away from the Right and deny the Day of Sorting Out, the Day when every action performed here will find its fulfilment in just reward or punishment.

10. But verily over you (are appointed angels)(6007) to protect you,-

6007 Besides the faculties given to man to guide him, and the Form and Personality through which he can rise by stages to the Presence of Allah, there are spiritual agencies around him to help and protect him, and to note down his Record, so that perfect justice may be done to him at the end. For these Guardian Angels, see 50:17-18, and n. 4954.

11. Kind and honourable,- Writing down (your deeds):

12. They know (and understand) all that ye do.

13. As for the Righteous, they will be in bliss;

14. And the Wicked - they will be in the Fire,

15. Which they will enter(6008) on the Day of Judgement,

6008 I understand this relative clause to govern "the Fire", *i.e.,* the Punishment. It will be postponed as long as possible, to give the Sinner every chance of repentance and amendment. But once the period of probation is past, it will be irrevocable. There will be no going back from it. By inference, the Righteous may individually reach some stage of Bliss at once, possibly in this life, possibly after death, though the Final Judgement will be the general and complete cessation of this fleeting world and the creation of the world of Eternity.

16. And they will not be able to keep away therefrom.

17. And what will explain to thee what the Day of Judgment is?

18. Again, what will explain to thee what the Day of Judgment is?(6009)

6009 We can speak of Rewards and Punishments, the Fruits of Actions, the Resurrection and the Tribunal, the Restoration of True Values, the Elimination of all Wrong, and a hundred other phrases. They might serve to introduce our minds vaguely to a new World, of which they cannot possibly form any adequate conception under present conditions. The question is repeated in verses 17-18 to emphasise this difficulty, and a simple answer is suggested, as explained in the next note.

19. (It will be) the Day when no soul shall have power (to do) aught for another:(6010) For the command, that Day, will be (wholly) with Allah.

6010 The answer is suggested by a negative proposition: 'No soul shall have power to do aught for another'. This is full of meaning. Personal responsibility will be fully enforced. In this world we all depend on one another proximately, though our ultimate dependence is always on Allah, now and forever. But here a father helps a son forward; husband and wife influence each other's destinies; human laws and institutions may hold large masses of mankind under their grip; falsehood and evil may seem to flourish for a time, because a certain amount of limited free will has been granted to man. This period will be all over then. The good and the pure will have been separated from the evil and the rebellious; the latter will have been rendered inert, and the former will have been so perfected that their wills will be in complete consonance with Allah's Universal Will. The Command, thenceforward, will be wholly with Allah.

83. Al Mutaffifin (The Dealing in Fraud)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Woe to those that deal in fraud,-(6011)

6011 "Fraud" must here be taken in a widely general sense. It covers giving short measure or short weight, but it covers much more than that. The next two verses make it clear that it is the spirit of injustice that is condemned-giving too little and asking too much. This may be shown in commercial dealings, where a man exacts a higher standard in his own favour than he is willing to concede as against him. In domestic or social matters an individual or group may ask for honour, or respect, or services which he or they are not willing to give on their side in similar circumstances. It is worse than one-sided selfishness: for it is double injustice. But it is worst of all in religion or spiritual life: with what face can a man ask for Mercy or Love from Allah when he is unwilling to give it to his fellow-men? In one aspect this is a statement of the Golden Rule. 'Do as you would be done by'. But it is more completely expressed. You must give in full what is due from you, whether you expect or wish to receive full consideration from the other side or not.

2. Those who, when they have to receive by measure from men, exact full measure,

3. But when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due.

4. Do they not think that they will be called to account?-(6012)

6012 Legal and social sanctions against Fraud depend for their efficacy on whether there is a chance of being found out. Moral and religious sanctions are of a different kind. 'Do you wish to degrade your own nature?' 'Do you not consider that there is a Day of Account before a J udge Who knows all, and Who safeguards all interests, for He is the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds? Whether other people know anything about your wrong or not, you are guilty before Allah.'

5. On a Mighty Day,

6. A Day when (all) mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds?

7. Day! Surely the record of the wicked is (preserved) in Sijjin.(6013)

6013 This is a word from the same root as *Sijn,* a Prison. It rhymes with and is contrasted with *'Illiyin* in verse 18 below. It is therefore understood by many Commentators to be a place, a Prison or a Dungeon in which the Wicked are confined pending their appearance before the Judgement Seat. The mention of the Inscribed Register in verse 9 below may imply that *Sijjin* is the name of the Register of Black Deeds, though verse 9 may be elliptical and may only describe the place by the significance of its contents.

8. And what will explain to thee what Sijjin is?

9. (There is) a Register (fully) inscribed.(6014)

6014 If we take *Sijjin* to be the Register itself, and not the place where it is kept, the Register itself is a sort of Prison for those who do wrong. It is inscribed fully: *i.e.,* no one is omitted who ought to be there, and for every entry there is a complete record, so that there is no escape for the sinner. (R).

10. Woe, that Day, to those that deny-

11. Those that deny the Day of Judgement.(6015)

6015 The fact of Personal Responsibility for each soul is so undoubted that people who deny it are to be pitied, and will indeed be in a most pitiable condition on the Day of Reckoning, and none but the most abandoned sinner can deny it, and he only denies it by playing with Falsehoods.

12. And none can deny it but the Transgressor beyond bounds the Sinner!

13. When Our Signs are rehearsed to him, he says, "Tales of the ancients!"(6016)

6016 *Cf.* 6:25; 68:15; etc. They scorn Truth and pretend that it is Falsehood.

14. By no means! but on their hearts is the stain of the (ill) which they do!(6017)

6017 The heart of a man, as created by Allah, is pure and unsullied. Every time that a man does an ill deed, it marks a stain or rust on his heart. But on repentance and forgiveness, such stain is washed off. If there is no repentance and forgiveness, the stains deepen and spread more and more, until the heart is sealed (2:7), and eventually the man dies a spiritual death. It is such stains that stand in the way of his perceiving Truths which are obvious to others. That is why he mocks at Truth and hugs Falsehood to his bosom.

15. Verily, from (the Light of) their Lord, that Day, will they be veiled.(6018)

6018 The stain of evil deeds on their hearts sullies the mirror of their hearts, so that it does not receive the light. At Judgement the true Light, the Glory of the Lord, the joy of the Righteous, will be hidden by veils from the eyes of the Sinful. Instead, the Fire of Punishment will be to them the only reality which they will perceive.

16. Further, they will enter the Fire of Hell.

17. Further, it will be said to them: "This is the (reality) which ye rejected as false!

18. Day, verily the record of the Righteous is (preserved) in ´Illiyin.(6019)

6019 *I lliyin:* the oblique form of the nominative *'Iliyun,* which occurs in the next verse. It is in contrast to the *Sijjin* which occurs in verse 7 above, where see n. 6013. Literally, it means the 'High Places', but it is probably not the same as the 'Heights' *(A'raf)* mentioned in 7:46. Nor need we necessarily identify it with the "dwellings on high" *(gh urufat)* mentioned in 34:37. Applying the reasoning parallel to that which we applied to *Sijjin,* we may interpret it as the Place where is kept the Register of the Righteous.

19. And what will explain to thee what ´Illiyun is?

20. (There is) a Register (fully) inscribed,(6020)

6020 This repeats verse 9 above, where see n. 6014. But the Register is of the opposite kind, that of the Righteous. It contains every detail of the Righteous. (R).

21. To which bear witness those Nearest (to Allah).(6021)

6021 See 56:11, n. 5227; also n. 5223. Those Nearest to Allah will be witnesses to this Righteous Record; or as it may also be rendered, they will be present at the Record, and watch this Record. Metaphorically, the hightest spiritual dignitaries are always helping and assisting at the piling up of the good record of every soul that strives for good, however humble in rank that soul may be.

22. Truly the Righteous will be in Bliss:

23. On Thrones (of Dignity)(6022) will they command a sight (of all things):

6022 *Cf*. 36:56.

24. Thou wilt recognise in their Faces(6023) the beaming brightness of Bliss.

6023 *Cf.* 75:22, and 76:11.

25. Their thirst will be slaked with Pure Wine sealed:(6024)

6024 The Wine will be of the utmost purity and flavour, so precious that it will be protected with a seal, and the seal itself will be of the costly material of musk, which is most highly esteemed in the East for its perfume. Perhaps a better interpretation of the "seal" is to take it as implying the final effect of the drink: just as a seal closes a document, so the seal of the drink will be the final effect of the delicious perfume and flavour of musk, heightening the enjoyment and helping in the digestion. (R).

26. The seal thereof will be Musk: And for this let those aspire, who have aspirations:(6025)

6025 If you understand true and lasting values, this is the kind of pure Bliss to aspire for, and not the fleeting enjoyments of this world, which always leave a sting behind.

27. With it will be (given) a mixture of Tasnim:(6026)

6026 *Tasnim* literally indicates height, fulness, opulence. Here it is the name of a heavenly Fountain, whose drink is superior to that of the Purest Wine. It is the nectar drunk by Those Nearest to Allah {n. 5227 to 56:11), the highest in spiritual dignity; but a flavour of it will be given to all, according to their spiritual capacity. See n. 5835 to 76:5 *(Kafur* fountain), and n. 5849 to 76:17-28 *(Salsabil),* (R).

28. A spring, from (the waters) whereof drink those Nearest to Allah.

29. Those in sin used to laugh at those who believed,

30. And whenever they passed by them, used to wink at each other (in mockery);

31. And when they returned to their own people, they would return jesting;

32. And whenever they saw them, they would say, "Behold! These are the people truly astray!"(6027)

6027 The wicked laugh at the righteous in this world in many ways. (1) They inwardly laugh at their Faith, because they feel themselves so superior. (2) In public places, when the righteous pass, they wink at each other and insult them. (3) In their own houses they run them down. (4) Whenever and wherever they see them, they reproach them with being fools who have lost their way, when the boot is really on the other leg. In the Hereafter all these tricks and falsehoods will be shown for what they are, and the tables will be reversed.

33. But they had not been sent as keepers over them!(6028)

6028 But the wicked critics of the Righteous have no call in any case to sit in judgement over them. Who set them as Keepers or guardians over the Righteous? Let them look to their own condition and future first.

34. But on this Day the Believers will laugh at the Unbelievers:(6029)

6029 The tables will then be reversed, and he laughs best who laughs last.

35. On Thrones (of Dignity) they will command (a sight) (of all things).(6030)

6030 A repetition of verse 23 above, but with a different shade of meaning. The Righteous on their Thrones of Dignity will be able to see all the true values restored in their own favour: but they will also see something else: they will also see the arrogant braggarts brought low, who brought about their own downfall by their own actions.

36. Will not the Unbelievers have been paid back for what they did?



84. Al Inshiqaq (The Rending Asunder)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. When the sky is rent asunder,(6031)

6031 The passing away of this world of sense to make way for a new World of Reality is here indicated by two Facts, which are themselves Symbols for a complete revolution in our whole knowledge and experience. At the beginning of S. 82 and S. 81, other Symbols were used, to lead up to the arguments there advanced. Here the Symbols are: (1) the Sky being rent asunder and giving up its secrets, and (2) the Earth being flattened out from the globe it is, and giving up its secrets *(Cf.* 25:25 and 50:44). See the following notes.

2. And hearkens(6032) to (the Command of) its Lord, and it must needs (do so);-

6032 We may think that the heavens we see above us—high and sacred, seemingly vast and limitless, eternal and timeless—are not created matter. But they are. And they remain just so long as Allah wills it so, and not a moment longer. As soon as His Command issues for their dissolution, they will obey and vanish, and all their mystery will be emptied out. And it must necessarily be so; their very nature as created beings requires that they must hearken to the voice of their Creator, even to the extent of their own extinction.

3. And when the earth is flattened out,(6033)

6033 The Earth is a globe, enclosing within it many secrets and mysteries—gold and diamonds in its mines, heat and magnetic forces in its entrails, and the bodies of countless generations of men buried within its soil. At its dissolution all these contents will be disgorged: it will lose its shape as a globe, and cease to exist.

A more mystic meaning lies behind the ordinary meaning of the vanishing of the heavens and the earth as we see them. Our ideas of them—their subjective contents with reference to ourselves will also lose all shape and form and vanish before the eternal verities.

4. And casts forth what is within it and becomes (clean) empty,

5. And hearkens to(6034) (the Command of) its Lord,- and it must needs (do so);- (then will come Home the full reality).(6035)

6034 See n. 6032. We think the earth so solid and real. All our perishable things dissolve into the earth. But the earth itself will dissolve into a truer Reality.

6035 The substantive clause, to follow the two conditional clauses preceding, may be filled up from the suggestion contained in 82:5.

6. O thou man! Verily thou art ever toiling on towards thy Lord-(6036) painfully toiling,- but thou shalt meet Him.

<u>6036</u> This life is ever full of toil and misery, if looked at as empty of the Eternal Hope which Revelation gives us. Hence the literature of pessimism in poetry and philosophy, which thinking minds have poured forth in all ages, when that Hope was obscured to them. "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." "To each his suffering; all are men condemned alike to groan!" It is the noblest men that have to "scorn delights and live laborious days" in this life. The good suffer on account of their very goodness: the evil on account of their Evil. But the balance will be set right in the end. Those that wept shall be made to rejoice, and those that went about thoughdessly rejoicing, shall be made to weep for their folly. They will all go to their account with Allah and meet Him before His Throne of Judgement.

7. Then he who is given his Record in his Right hand,(6037)

<u>6037</u> *Right Hand: Cf.* 17:71. These will be the fortunate ones, who spent their lives in goodness and truth: for them the account will be made easy; for even after the balancing, they will receive more than their merits deserve, on account of the infinite grace and mercy of Allah.

8. Soon will his account be taken by an easy reckoning,

9. And he will turn to his people,(6038) rejoicing!

<u>6038</u> *His People:* should be understood in a large sense, including all righteous persons of his category, (including of course all those nearest and dearest to him), who are spiritually of his family, whether before him or after him in time.

10. But he who is given his Record behind his back,-(6039)

<u>6039</u> In 69:24, the wicked are given the Record in their left hand. But their hands will not be free. Sin will have tied their hands behind their back: and thus they can only receive their Records in their left hand, behind their back.

11. Soon will he cry for Perdition,(6040)

<u>6040</u> The wicked will cry for death and annihilation: but they will neither live nor die: 20:74.

12. And he will enter a Blazing Fire.

13. Truly, did he go about among his people, rejoicing!(6041)

<u>6041</u> The tables are now turned. His self-complacence and self-conceit in his lower life will now give place to weeping and gnashing of teeth! *Cf.* n. 6036 above.

14. Truly, did he think that he would not have to return (to Us)!(6042)

<u>6042</u> Most of the Evil in this world is due to the false idea that man is irresponsible, or to a mad and thoughtless indulgence of self. Man is not irresponsible. He is responsible for every deed, word, and thought of his, to his Maker, to Whom he has to return, to give an account of himself. To remember this and act accordingly is to achieve salvation; to forget or flout that responsibility is to get into the Fire of self-deception and misery.

15. Nay, nay! for his Lord was (ever) watchful of him!

16. So I do call(6043) to witness the ruddy glow of Sunset;(6044)

<u>6043</u> The same form of adjuration as in 69:37. The substantive statement is in verse 19 below: "Ye shall surely travel from stage to stage". Nothing in this life is fixed, or will last. Three things are mentioned which on the one hand have remained from age to age for as far back as the memory of man can go, and yet each of them is but a short phase, gone as it were in the twinkling of an eye. See the following notes: So our life here is but a fleeting show. Its completion is to be looked for elsewhere.

<u>6044</u> (1) The sun seems such a great reality that people worshipped it as a divinity. The beautiful glow it leaves when it sets is but momentary: it changes every moment and vanishes with the twilight.

17. The Night and its Homing;(6045)

<u>6045</u> (2) The Night is a phenomenon you see during almost half of every twenty-four hours in ordinary latitudes. At nightfall, all the wandering flocks and herds come home. The men scattered abroad for their livelihood return home to rest and sleep. The Night collects them in their homes, and yet this phase of Homing lasts but a little while. Presently all is silent and still. So will it be with our souls when this life is ended with our death. We shall be collected in a newer and larger Homing.

18. And the Moon in her Fullness:(6046)

<u>6046</u> (3) The astronomical Full Moon does not last a moment. The moment the moon is full, she begins to decline, and the moment she is in her "inter-lunar swoon", she begins her career anew as a growing New Moon. So is man's life here below. It is not fixed or permanent, either in its physical phases, or even more strikingly, in its finer phases, intellectual, emotional, or spiritual.

19. Ye shall surely travel from stage to stage.(6047)

<u>6047</u> Man travels and ascends stage by stage. In 67:3 the same word in the form *tibaqa* was used of the heavens, as if they were in layers one above another. Man's spiritual life may similarly be compared to an ascent from one heaven to another.

20. What then is the matter with them, that they believe not?-(6048)

<u>6048</u> Considering man's high destiny, and the fact that this life is but a stage or a sojourn for him, it might be expected that he would eagerly embrace every opportunity of welcoming Allah's Revelation and ascending by Faith to heights of spiritual wisdom. There is something wrong with his will if he does not do so. Notice the transition from the second person in verse 19, where there is a direct appeal to Allah's votaries, to the third person in verses 20-21, where men who are rebels against Allah's Kingdom are spoken of as if thev were alien.

21. And when the Qur´an is read to them, they fall not prostrate,(6049)

<u>6049</u> *Prostrate:* out of respect and humble gratitude to Allah.

22. But on the contrary the Unbelievers reject (it).

23. But Allah has full knowledge of what they secrete (in their breasts)

24. So announce to them a Penalty Grievous,

25. Except to those who believe and work righteous deeds: For them is a Reward that will never fail.(6050)

<u>6050</u> *Cf.* 41:8.

85. Al Buruj (The Constellation)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the sky, (displaying)(6051) the Zodiacal Signs;(6052)

6051 Here is an appeal to three symbols in verses 1 -3, and the substantive proposition is in verses 4-8, a denunciation of wicked persecutors of the votaries of Allah, persecutors who burnt righteous men for their Faith. The three Symbols are: (1) the Glorious Sky, with the broad belt of the Constellations marking the twelve Signs of the Zodiac; (2) the Day of Judgement, when all evil will be punished; and (3) certain Persons that will be witnesses, and certain Persons or things that will be t he subjects of the witness. See the notes following.

6052 See n. 1950 to 15:16. The Stars of the Zodiac as well as of other Constellations are like the eyes of the Night. It may be that crimes are committed in the darkness of night (literally or metaphorically). But countless eyes (metaphorically) are watching all the time, and every author of evil will be brought to book.

2. By the promised Day (of Judgment);(6053)

6053 The Day of Judgement, when the Sinner will have to give an account of every deed, open or hidden, is not merely a matter of speculation. It is definitely promised in revelation, and will inevitably come to pass. Woe then to the Sinners for their crimes.

3. By one that witnesses, and the subject of the witness;-(6054)

6054 The literal meaning is clear, but its metaphorical application has been explained in a variety of ways by different Commentators. The words are fairly comprehensive, and should, I think, be understood in connection with Judgement There the Witnesses may be: (1) the Prophets (3:81); Allah Himself (3:81. and 10:61); *(he* Recording Angels (50:21); the Sinner's own misused limbs (24:24); his record of deeds (17:14); or the Sinner himself (17:14). The subject of the witness may be the deed or crime, or the Sinner against whom the testimony cries out The appeal to these tilings means that the Sinner cannot possibly escape the consequences of his crime. He should repent, seek Allah's Mercy, and amend his life.

4. Woe to the makers of the pit (of fire),(6055)

6055 Who were the makers of the pit of fire in which they burnt people for their Faith? The words are perfectly general, and we need not search for particular names, except by way of illustration. In ancient history, and in Mediaeval Europe, many lives were sacrificed at the stake because the victims did not conform to the established religion. In Arab tradition there is the story of Abraham: Nimrud tries to burn him to death, but on account of Abraham's Faith, the fire became "a means of safety for Abraham": 21:69, and n. 2725. Another case cited is that of Dhu Nuwas, the last Himyarite King of Yemen , by religion a Jew, who persecuted the Christians of Najran and is said to have burnt them to death. He seems to have lived in the latter half of the sixth Christian century, in the generation immediately preceding the Prophet's birth in 570 A.D. Whale the words are perfectly general, a reference is suggested to the persecution to which the early Muslims were subjected by the Pagan Quraysh. Among other cruelties, they were stripped, and their skins were exposed to the burning rays of the Arabian summer sun. (R).

5. Fire supplied (abundantly) with fuel:

6. Behold! They sat(6056) over against the (fire),

6056 The persecutors sat calmly to gloat over the agonies of their victims in the well-fed Fire.

7. And they witnessed (all) that they were doing against the Believers.

8. And they ill-treated them for no other reason than that they believed in Allah, Exalted in Power, Worthy of all Praise!-

9. Him to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth! And Allah is Witness to all things.(6057)

6057 It is suggested that the persecutors will richly deserve to be punished in the Fire of Hell. That Punishment will be far more real and lasting than the undeserved cruelty which they inflicted on men for their Faith in the One True God.

10. Those who persecute (or draw into temptation) the Believers, men and women, and do not turn in repentance, will have the Penalty of Hell: They will have the Penalty of the Burning Fire.(6058)

6058 The "Penalty of the Burning Fire" has been mentioned here in addition to the "Penalty of Hell". This assumes a special significance in the background of the cruel burning of the Faithful by the "makers of the pit". These criminals would be duly retributed by being subjected to a similar kind of suffering that they had caused their innocent victims. [Eds.].

11. For those who believe and do righteous deeds, will be Gardens;(6059) beneath which rivers flow: That is the great Salvation, (the fulfilment of all desires),(6060)

6059 *Cf.* 5:119 and 9:72.

6060 *Cf.* 5:119, n. 833.

12. Truly strong is the Grip (and Power) of thy Lord.

13. It is He Who creates from the very beginning,(6061) and He can restore (life).

6061 For the various words for "Creation" and the ideas implied in them, see n. 120 to 2:117.

14. And He is the Oft-Forgiving, Full of Loving-Kindness,

15. Lord of the Throne of Glory,

16. Doer (without let)(6062) of all that He intends.

6062 Allah's Will is itself the Word and the Deed. There is no interval between them. He does not change His mind. No circumstances whatever can come between His Will and the execution thereof. Such are His Power and His Glory. Compare it with that of men, described in the next two verses.

17. Has the story reached thee, of the forces-(6063)

6063 In contrast to the real, all-embracing, and eternal power of Allah, what are the forces of man at their best? Two examples are mentioned. (1) Pharaoh was a proud monarch of a powerful kingdom, with resources and organisation, material, moral, and intellectual, as good as any in the world. When he pitted himself against Allah's Prophet, he and his forces were destroyed. See 79:15-26. (2) Thamud were great builders, and had a high standard of material civilisation. But they defied the law of Allah and perished. See 7:73-79, and n. 1043.

18. Of Pharaoh and the Thamud?

19. And yet the Unbelievers (persist) in rejecting (the Truth)!(6064)

6064 In spite of the great examples of the past, by which human might and skill were shown to have availed nothing when the law of Allah was broken, the unbelievers persist (in all ages) in defying that law. But Allah will know how to deal with them.

20. But Allah doth encompass them from behind!(6065)

6065 Allah encompasses everything. But the wicked will find themselves defeated not only in conditions that they foresee, but from all sorts of unexpected directions, perhaps from behind them, *i.e.,* from the very people or circumstances which in their blindness they despised or thought of as helping them.

21. Day, this is a Glorious Qur´an,

22. (Inscribed) in a Tablet Preserved!(6066)

6066 *Inscribed in a Table Preserved, i.e.,* Allah's Message is not ephemeral. It is eternal. The "Tablet" is "preserved" or guarded from corruption: 15:9: for Allah's Message must endure forever. That Message is the "Mother of the book": see n. 347 v. 3:7. (R).



86. Al Tariq (The Night Star)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the Sky(6067) and the Night-Visitant(6068) (therein);-

6067 The appeal here is to a single mystic Symbol, *viz.:* the Sky with its Night Visitant: and the substantive proposition is in verse 4: "There is no soul but has a protector over it". In the last Surah we considered the persecution of Allah's votaries, and how Allah protects them. Here the same theme is presented in another aspect. In the darkest sky shines out most brilliantly the light of the most brilliant star. So in the night of spiritual darkness-whether through ignorance of distress-shines the glorius star of Allah's revelation. By the same token the man of Faith and Truth has nothing to fear. Allah will protect His own.

6068 This is explained in verse 3 below. The "Star of piercing brightness" is understood by some to be the Morning Star, by others to be the planet Saturn, by others again to be Sirius, or the Pleiades or shooting stars. I think it is best to take "Star" in the collective or generic sense, for stars shine on every night in the year, and their piercing brightness is most noticeable on the darkest night.

2. And what will explain to thee what the Night-Visitant is?-

3. (It is) the Star of piercing brightness;-

4. There is no soul but has a protector over it.(6069)

6069 If man has a true spiritual understanding, he has nothing to be afraid of. He is protected by Allah in many ways that he does not even know. He may be an insignificant creature as a mere animal, but his soul raises him to a dignity above other creation. And all sorts of divine forces guard and protect him.

5. Now let man but think from what he is created!

6. He is created from a drop emitted-(6070)

6070 See n. 5832 to 76:2. See also last note.

7. Proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs:(6071)

6071 A man's seed is the quintessence of his body. It is therefore said metaphorically to proceed from his loins, *i.e.,* from his back between the hipbones and his ribs. His backbone is the source and symbol of his strength and personality. In his spinal cord and in the brain is the directive energy of the central nervous system, and this directs all action, organic and psychic. The spinal cord is continuous with the Medulla Oblongata in the brain.

8. Surely (Allah) is able to bring him back (To life)!(6072)

6072 The Creator who can mingle the forces of psychic and physical muscular action in the creation of man, as explained in the last note, can surely give a new life after physical death here, and restore man's personality in the new world that will open out in the Hereafter.

9. The Day that (all) things secret will be tested,

10. (Man) will have no power, and no helper.(6073)

6073 In that new world, all our actions, motives, thoughts, and imaginings of this life, however secret, will be brought into the open, and tested by the standards of absolute Truth, and not by false standards of custom, prejudice, or partiality. In that severe test, any adventitious advantages of this life will have no strength or force whatever, and cannot help in any way.

11. By the Firmament(6074) which returns (in its round),

6074 The Firmament above is always the same, and yet it performs its diurnal round, smoothly and punctually. So does Allah's Revelation show forth the Truth, which like a circle is ever true to its centre-which is ever the same, though it revolves through the changing circumstances of our present life.

12. And by the Earth which opens out(6075) (for the gushing of springs or the sprouting of vegetation),-

6075 The earth seems hard, but springs can gush forth and vegetables sprout through it and make it green and soft. So is Truth: hard perhaps to mortals, but through the fertilising agency of Revelation, it allows our inner personality to sprout and blossom forth.

13. Behold this is the Word that distinguishes (Good from Evil):(6076)

6076 See the last two notes. Revelation-Allah's Truth-can pierce through the hardest crusts, and ever lead us back to the centre and goal of our spiritual life: for it separates Good from Evil definitely. It is not mere play or amusement, any more than the Sky or the Earth is. It helps us in the highest issues of our life.

14. It is not a thing for amusement.

15. As for them,(6077) they are but plotting a scheme,

6077 Though Allah in His Mercy has provided a piercing light to penetrate our spiritual darkness, and made our beings responsive to the growth of spiritual understanding, just as the hard earth is responsive to the sprouting of a seed or the gushing of a stream, yet there are evil, unregenerate men who plot and scheme against the beneficent purpose of Allah. But their plots will be of no avail, and Allah's Purpose will prevail. It happened so with the Quraysh who wanted to thwart the growth of Islam. It will be so in all ages.

16. And I am planning a scheme.(6078)

6078 *Makara* is applied both to plotting with an evil purpose and planning with a good purpose. *Cf.* 3:54, and n. 393 "And the unbelievers plotted and planned, and Allah too planned, and the best of planners is Allah."

17. Therefore grant a delay to the Unbelievers: Give respite to them gently (for awhile).(6079)

6079 Gentle forbearance with Evil shows our trust in Allah and Allah's Plan; for it can never be frustrated. This does not mean that we should assist or compromise with evil, or fail to put it down where we have the power. It means patience and humility where we have no visible power to prevent Evil.

87. Al A'la (The Most High)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Glorify the name of thy Guardian-Lord(6080) Most High,

6080 The word "Lord" by itself is an inadequate rendering here for *Rabb.* For it implies cherishing, guarding from harm, sustaining, granting all the means and opportunities of development. See n. 20 to 1:2. For shortness, perhaps "Guardian-Lord" will be sufficient in the Text.

2. Who hath created,(6081) and further, given order and proportion;

6081 The story of Creation is wonderful and continuous. There are several processes which we contemplate in glorifying Allah's name. First, He brings us into being. Secondly, He endows us with forms and faculties exactly suited to what is expected of us, and to the environments in which our life will be cast, giving to everything due order and proportion.

3. Who hath ordained laws.(6082) And granted guidance;

6082 Thirdly, He has ordained laws and decrees, by which we can develop ourselves and fit ourselves into His whole scheme of evolution for all His Creation. He has measured exactly the needs of all, and given us instincts and physical and psychic predispositions which fit into His decrees. Fourthly, He gives us guidance, so that we are not the sport of mechanical laws. Our reason and our will are exercised, that we may reach the higher destiny of man.

4. And Who bringeth out(6083) the (green and luscious) pasture,

6083 Fifthly, after maturity comes decay. But even in that decay, as when green pasture turns to stubble, we subserve other ends. Insofar as we are animals, we share these processes with other forms of material. Creation, animal, vegetable, and even mineral, which all have their appointed laws of growth and decay. But man's higher destiny is referred to in subsequent verses.

5. And then doth make it (but) swarthy stubble.

6. By degrees shall We teach thee to declare(6084) (the Message), so thou shalt not forget,(6085)

6084 The soul, as it reaches the Light of Allah, makes gradual progress, like a man going from darkness into light. So the Qur'an was revealed by stages. So all revelation from Allah comes by stages.

As usual, there are two parallel meanings: (1) that connected with the occasion of direct inspiration to the Prophet; and (2) the more general Message to mankind for all time. Everyone who understands the Message must declare it, in words, and still more, in his conduct.

6085 The particular occasion was an assurance to the Prophet, that though he was unlettered, the Message given to him would be preserved in his heart and in the hearts of men. The more general sense is that mankind, having once seized great spiritual truths, will hold fast to them, except as qualified in the following verse.

7. Except as Allah wills:(6086) For He knoweth what is manifest and what is hidden.

6086 There can be no question of this having any reference to the abrogation of any verses of the Qur'an, for this Surah is one of the earliest revealed, being placed about eighth according to the most accepted chronological order. While the basic principles of Allah's Law remain the same, its form, expression, and application have varied from time to time, *e.g.,* from Moses to Jesus, and from Jesus to Muhammad. It is one of the beneficent mercies of Allah that we should forget some things of the past, lest our minds become confused and our development is retarded. Besides, Allah knows what is manifest and what is hidden, and His Will and Plan work with supreme wisdom and goodness.

8. And We will make it easy for thee (to follow) the simple (Path).(6087)

6087 The path of Islam is simple and easy. It depends on no abstruse mysteries or self-mortifications, but on straight and manly conduct in accordance with the laws of man's nature as implanted in him by Allah (30:30). On the other hand, spiritual perfection may be most difficult, for it involves complete surrender on our part to Allah in all our affairs, thoughts, and desires: but after that surrender Allah's Grace will make our path easy.

9. Therefore give admonition in case the admonition(6088) profits (the hearer).

6088 This is not so strong as the Biblical phrase, "Cast not pearls before swine" (Matt. 7:6) The cases where admonition does produce spiritual profit and where it does not, are mentioned below in verses 10 and 11-13 respectively. Allah's Message should be proclaimed to all; but particular and personal admonitions are also due to those who attend and in whose hearts is the fear of Allah; in the case of those who run away from it and dishonour it, such particular and personal admonition is useless. They are the unfortunate ones who prepare their own ruin.

10. The admonition will be received by those who fear ((Allah)):

11. But it will be avoided by those most unfortunate ones,

12. Who will enter the Great Fire,(6089)

6089 The Great Fire is the final Penalty or Disaster in the Hereafter, as contrasted with the minor Penalties or Disasters from which all evil suffers from within in this very life.

13. In which they will then neither die nor live.(6090)

6090 A terrible picture of those who ruin their whole future by evil lives here below. They introduce a discord into Creation, while life should be one great universal concord. And their past clings to them as part of their own will. They are not even like the dry swarthy stubble mentioned in verse 5 above, which grew naturally out of the luscious pasture, for they have grown harmful, in defiance of their own nature. *"Neither die nor live"; Cf.* 20:74.

14. But those will prosper(6091) who purify themselves,(6092)

6091 *Prosper;* in the highest and spiritual sense; attain to Bliss or Salvation: as opposed to "enter the Fire".

6092 The first process in godliness is to cleanse ourselves in body, mind, and soul. Then we shall be in a fit state to see and proclaim the Glory of Allah. That leads us to our actual absorption in Praise and Prayer.

15. And glorify the name of their Guardian-Lord, and (lift their hearts) in prayer.

16. Day (behold), ye prefer the life of this world;

17. But the Hereafter is better and more enduring.

18. And this is in the Books of the earliest (Revelation),-(6093)

6093 The law of righteousness and godliness is not a new law, nor are the vanity and short duration of this world preached here for the first time. But spiritual truths have to be renewed and reiterated again and again.

19. The Books of Abraham(6094) and Moses.(6095)

6094 No Book of Abraham has come down to us. But the Old Testament recognises that Abraham was a prophet (Gen. 20:7, 18:17-19). There is a book in Greek, which has been translated by Mr. G.H. Box, called *the* Testament of Abraham (published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, London , 1927). It seems to be a Greek translation of a Hebrew original. The

Greek Text was probably written in the second Christian century, in Egypt, but in its present form it probably goes back only to the 9th or 10th Century. It was popular among the Christians. Perhaps the Jewish Midrash also refers to a Testament of Abraham.

6095 The original Revelation of Moses, of which the Present Pentateuch is a surviving recension. See Appendix II., p. 288-290.

The present Gospels do not come under the definition of the "earliest" Books. Nor could they be called "Books of Jesus"; they were written not by him, but about him, and long after his death.



88. Al Ghashiyah (The Overwhelming Event)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Has the story reached thee of the overwhelming (Event)?(6096)

6096 *Al Ghashiyah:* the thing or event that overshadows or overwhelms, that covers over or makes people lose their senses. In 12:107, it is described as the "covering veil of the Wrath of Allah"; where see n . 1 7 90. The Day of Judgement is indicated, as the Event of overwhelming importance in which all our petty differences of this imperfect world are covered over and overwhelmed in a new world of perfect justice and truth.

2. Some faces, that Day,(6097) will be humiliated,

6097 *Cf.* 75:22, 24.

3. Labouring (hard), weary,-(6098)

6098 On the faces of the wicked will appear the hard labour and consequent fatigue of the task they will have in battling against the fierce Fire which their own Deeds will have kindled.

4. The while they enter the Blazing Fire,-

5. The while they are given, to drink, of a boiling hot spring,

6. No food will there be for them but a bitter Dhari´(6099)

6099 The root meaning implies again the idea of humiliation. It is a plant, bitter and thorny, loathsome in smell and appearance, which will neither give fattening nourishment to the body nor in any way satisfy the burning pangs of hunger—a fit plant for Hell , like *Zaqqum* (56:52; or 17:60, n. 2250).

7. Which will neither nourish nor satisfy hunger.

8. (Other) faces that Day will be joyful,

9. Pleased with their Striving,-(6100)

6100 Notice the parallelism in contrast, between the fate of the Wicked and that of the Righteous. In the one case there was humiliation in their faces; in the other, there is joy; where there was labour and weariness in warding off the Fire, there is instead a healthy Striving, which is itself pleasurable—a Striving which is a pleasant consequence of the spiritual Endeavour in the earthly life, which may have brought trouble or persecution from without, but which brought inward peace and satisfaction.

10. In a Garden on high,(6101)

6101 The most important point is their inward state of joy and satisfaction, mentioned in verses 8-9. Now are mentioned the outer things of bliss, the chief of which is the Garden. The Garden is in contrast to the Fire. Its chief beauty will be that they will hear there nothing unbecoming, or foolish, or vain. It will be a Garden *on high,* in all senses-fit for the best, highest, and noblest. (R).

11. Where they shall hear no (word) of vanity:

12. Therein will be a bubbling spring:(6102)

6102 Instead of the boiling hot spring (verse 5) there will be a bubbling spring of sparkling water. Instead of the grovelling and grumbling in the place of Wrath, there will be Thrones of Dignity, with all the accompaniments of a brilliant Assembly.

13. Therein will be Thrones (of dignity), raised on high,

14. Goblets placed (ready),

15. And cushions set in rows,

16. And rich carpets (all) spread out.

17. Do they not look at the Camels,(6103) how they are made?-

6103 In case men neglect the Hereafter as of no account, they are asked to contemplate four things, which they can see in everyday life, and which are full of meaning, high design, and the goodness of Allah to man. The first mentioned is the domesticated animal, which for Arab countries is *par excellence* the Camel. What a wonderful structure has this Ship of the Desert? He can store water in his stomach for days. He can live on dry and thorny desert shrubs. His limbs are adapted to his life. He can carry men and goods. His flesh can be eaten. Camel's hair can be used in weaving. And withal, he is so gentle! Who can sing his praises enough?

18. And at the Sky,(6104) how it is raised high?-

6104 The second thing they should consider is the noble blue vault high above them-with the sun and moon, the stars and planets, and other heavenly bodies. This scene is full of beauty and magnificence, design and order, plainness and mystery. And yet we receive our light and warmth from the sun, and what would our physical lives be without these influences that come from such enormous distances?

19. And at the Mountains,(6105) how they are fixed firm?-

6105 From everyday utility and affection in the Camel, to the utility in grandeur in the heavens above us, we had two instances touching our individual as well as our social lives. In the third instance, in the Mountains we come to the utility of mankind generally in the services the Mountains perform in storing water, in moderating climate, and in various other ways which it is the business of Physical Geography to investigate and describe.

20. And at the Earth,(6106) how it is spread out?

6106 The fourth and last instance given is that of the Earth as a whole, the habitation of mankind in our present phase of life. The Earth is a globe, and yet how marvellously it seems to be spread out before us in plains, valleys, hills, deserts, seas, etc.! Can man, seeing these things, fail to see a Plan and Purpose in his life, or fail to turn to the great Creator before Whom he will have to give an account after this life is done?

21. Therefore do thou give admonition, for thou art one to admonish.

22. Thou art not one to manage (men´s) affairs.(6107)

6107 The Prophet of Allah is sent to teach and direct people on the way. He is not sent to force their will, or to punish them, except insofar as he may receive authority to do so. Punishment belongs to Allah alone. And Punishment is certain in the Hereafter, when true values will be restored.

23. But if any turn away and reject Allah,-

24. Allah will punish him with a mighty Punishment,

25. For to Us will be their return;

26. Then it will be for Us to call them to account.



89. Al Fajr (The Dawn)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the break of Day;(6108)

6108 Four striking contrasts are mentioned, to show Allah's Power and Justice, and appeal to "those who understand". The first is the glory and mystery of the Break of Day. It just succeeds the deepest dark of the Night, when the first rays of light break through. Few people except those actually in personal touch with nature can feel its compelling power. In respect both of beauty and terror, of hope and inspiration, of suddenness and continuing increase of light and joy, this "holy time" of night may well stand as the type of spiritual awakening from darkness to Faith, from Death to Resurrection.

2. By the Nights twice five;(6109)

6109 By the Ten Nights are usually understood the first ten nights of Dhu al Hijjah, the sacred season of Pilgrimage. From the most ancient times Makkah was the centre of Arab pilgrimage. The story of Abraham is intimately connected with it; see 2:125-127 and notes, also n. 217 to 2:197. In times of Paganism various superstitions were introduced, which Islam swept away. Islam also purified the rites and ceremonies, giving them new meaning. The ten days specially devoted to the Hajj introduce a striking contrast in the life of Makkah and of the pilgrims. Makkah, from being a quiet secluded city, is then thronged with thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the world. They discard their ordinary dress-representing every kind of costume-to the simple and ordinary *Ihram* (n.217); they refrain from every kind of fighting and quarrel; they abstain from every kind of luxury and self-indulgence; they hold all life sacred, however humble, except in the way of symbolical and carefully regulated sacrifice; and they spend their nights in prayer and meditation.

3. By the even and odd (contrasted);(6110)

6110 The contrast between even and odd forms the subject of learned argument among those who deal with the mystic properties of numbers. In any case, even and odd follow each other in regular succession: each is independent, and yet neither is self-sufficient. In ultimate analysis every even number is a pair of odd ones. And all things go in pairs: see 36:36, and n. 3981. In the animal world pairs are but two individuals, and yet each is a complement of the other. Both abstract and concrete things are often understood in contrast with their opposites. Why should we not, in spiritual matters, understand this life better with reference to the Hereafter, and why should we disbelieve in the Hereafter simply because we cannot conceive of anything different from our present life?

4. And by the Night(6111) when it passeth away;-

6111 That is, the last part of the night, just before full daylight. Note the gradations in spiritual awakening, and their symbols: first, the turn of the night, when just the first rays of daylight break through; secondly, the social and institutional rites of religion, like those during the ten nights of Pilgrimage; thirdly, when the usual contrast between the Here and Hereafter vanishes, and we can see heaven even here; and lastly, when this world vanishes, the full light of Day arrives, and we see Reality face to face.

5. Is there (not) in these(6112) an adjuration (or evidence) for those who understand?

6112 All these mystic Symbols draw our attention, like solemn adjurations in speech, to the profoundest mystery of our inner life, *viz.,* how from utter depths of darkness-ignorance or even degradation-Allah's wonderful Light or Revelation can lead us by contrast into the most beautiful sunshine of a glorious spiritual Day. But the contrast suggests also the opposite process as a corollary-how resistance to Allah's light would destroy us utterly, converting our greatness or glory to perdition, as happened with the peoples of Arab antiquity, 'Ad and Thamud, and the type of the powerful but arrogant and godless monarch, the Pharaoh of Egypt. Like a man with a bounded horizon, the average man does not understand these long range mysteries of life, and we have need to pray that we may be of "those who understand".

6. Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the ´Ad (people),-(6113)

6113 For 'Ad see n. 1040 to 7:65. They seem to have possessed an ancient civilisation, which succumbed when they persistently broke Allah's law.

7. Of the (city of) Iram,(6114) with lofty pillars,

6114 Iram would seem to have been an ancient 'Ad capital, in southern Arabia . It boasted of lofty architecture ("lofty pillars"). Some Commentators understand Iram to be the name of an eponymous hero of 'Ad, in which case the following line, "with lofty pillars", should be construed "of lofty stature." 'Ad were a tall race.

8. The like of which were not produced in (all) the land?(6115)

6115 This tract of southern Arabia was once very prosperous (Arabia Felix) and contains ruins and inscriptions. It has always been an object of great interest to the Arabs. In the time of Mu'awiyah some precious stones were found among the ruins in this locality. Quite recently, a bronze lion's head and a bronze piece of gutter with a Sabaean inscription, found in Najran, have been described in the *British Museum Quarterly,* vol. XI, No. 4, Sept. 1937.

9. And with the Thamud(6116) (people), who cut out (huge) rocks in the valley?-

6116 For Thamud see n. 1043 to 6:73. Their civilisation shows traces of Egyptian, Syrian, and (later) Greek and Roman influences. They built fine temples, tombs, and buildings cut out of the solid rock. The cult of the goddess Lat flourished among them.

10. And with Pharaoh, Lord of Stakes?(6117)

6117 For "Lord of Stakes", see 38:12, n. 4160. For Pharaoh's arrogance and his fall, see 20:43, 78-79. The three examples given, 'Ad, Thamud, and Pharaoh, show that neither nations nor individuals, however mighty, prosperous, or firmly established they may be, can live if they transgress the Law of Allah. The Law of Allah, which is also the law of the higher nature which He has bestowed on us, made them in the first place great and glorious: when they fell from it and "heaped mischief on mischief, they were swept away.

11. (All) these transgressed beyond bounds in the lands,

12. And heaped therein mischief (on mischief).

13. Therefore did thy Lord pour on them a scourge of diverse chastisements:

14. For thy Lord is (as a Guardian) on a watchtower.(6118)

6118 Even though Allah's punishment is delayed, it is not to be supposed that He does not see all things-Allah's providence is ever vigilant: His punishment of evildoers is a form of justice to the weak and the righteous whom they oppress. It is part of the signification of His title as *Rabb* (Cherisher). (R).

15. Now, as for man,(6119) when his Lord trieth him, giving him honour and gifts, then saith he, (puffed up), "My Lord hath honoured me."

6119 Contrast with Allah's justice and watchful care, man's selfishness and pettiness. Allah tries us both by prosperity and adversity: in the one we should show humility and kindness; and in the other patience and faith. On the contrary, we get puffed up in prosperity and depressed in adversity, putting false values on this world's goods.

16. But when He trieth him, restricting his subsistence(6120) for him, then saith he (in despair), "My Lord hath humiliated me!"

6120 *Subsistence,* in both the literal and the figurative sense. Allah provides for all, but people complain if the provision is measured and restricted to their needs, circumstances, and antecedents, and does not come up to their desires or expectations, or is different from that given to people in quite different circumstances.

17. Nay, nay! But ye(6121) honour not the orphans!

6121 Even at our own valuation, if we are favoured with superfluities, do we think of the fatherless children, or the struggling poor? On the contrary, too many men are but ready to embezzle the helpless orphan's inheritance, and to waste their own substance in worthless riot instead of supplying the people's real needs.

18. Nor do ye encourage one another(6122) to feed the poor!-

6122 Kindness and generosity set up standards which even worldly men feel bound to follow out of social considerations even if they are not moved by higher motives. But the wicked find plausible excuses for their own hardheartedness, and by their evil example choke up the springs of charity and kindness in others *(Cf.* 69:34 and n. 6282).

19. And ye devour inheritance -(6123) all with greed,

6123 Inheritance is abused in two ways. (1) Guardians and trustees for the inheritance of minors or women or persons unable to look after their own interests should fulfil their trusts with even more care than they devote to their own interests. Instead of that they selfishly "devour" the property. (2) Persons who inherit property in their own rights should remember that in that case, too, it is a sacred trust. They must use it for the purposes, objects, and duties which they also inherit. It gives them no licence to live in idleness or waste their days in riotous show.

20. And ye love wealth with inordinate love!

21. Nay! When the earth is pounded to powder,(6124)

6124 Our attention is now called to the Day of Reckoning. Whether we failed to respect the rights of the helpless here or actually suppressed those rights in our mad love for the good things of this life, we shall have to answer in the realm of Reality. This solid earth, which we imagine to be so real, will crumble to powder like dust before the real Presence, manifested in glory *(Cf.* 69:14).

22. And thy Lord cometh, and His angels, rank upon rank,

23. And Hell, that Day,(6125) is brought (face to face),- on that Day will man remember, but how will that remembrance profit him?

6125 The Retribution will at last come, and we shall realise it in our inmost being, all the illusions of this fleeting world having been swept away. Then we shall remember, and wish, too late, that we had repented. Why not repent now? Why not bring forth the fruits of repentance now, as a preparation for the Hereafter?

24. He will say: "Ah! Would that I had sent forth (good deeds) for (this) my (Future) Life!"

25. For, that Day, His Chastisement will be such as none (else) can inflict,(6126)

6126 "Chastisement" in this verse and the "binding in bonds" in the next verse are two distinct phases of the Penalty. "Chastisement" involves pain and agony, such as cannot be imagined anywhere else, or from any other source, for it touches our inmost soul and cannot be compared with anything our bodies may suffer or others may inflict. "Bonds" imply confinement, want of freedom, the closing of a door which was once open but which we deliberately passed by. We see that others accepted in faith and entered that door. This shutting out of what might have been is worse than any other bonds or confinement we can imagine, and may be worse than actual chastisement.

26. And His bonds will be such as none (other) can bind.

27. (To the righteous soul will be said:) "O (thou) soul,(6127) in (complete) rest and satisfaction!

6127 The righteous enter into their inheritance and receive their welcome with a title that suggests freedom from all pain, sorrow, doubt, struggle, disappointment, passion, and even further desire: at rest, in peace; in a state of complete satisfaction.

In Muslim theology, this stage of the soul is the final stage of bliss. The unregenerate human soul, that seeks its satisfaction in the lower earthly desires, is the *Ammarah* (12:53). The self-reproaching soul that feels conscious of sin and resists it is the *Lawwamah* (75:2, and n. 5810).

28. "Come back thou to thy Lord,-(6128) well pleased (thyself), and well-pleasing unto Him!

6128 Note that Evil finds itself isolated, and cries out in lonely agony (verse 24), while Good receives a warm welcome from the Lord of Goodness Himself-also that it is the soul which enters heaven, and not the gross body which perishes .

29. "Enter thou, then, among My devotees!

30. "Yea, enter thou My Heaven!(6129)

6129 . The climax of the whole is: "Enter My Heaven!" Men may have imagined all kinds of heaven before, and many types and symbols are used in the sacred Word itself. But nothing can express the reality itself better than "My Heaven"- Allah's own Heaven! May we reach it through Allah's grace! (R).

90. Al Balad (The City)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. I do call to witness(6130) this City;-

6130 The appeal to the mystic ties between the Prophet and his parent city of Makkah has been explained in the Introduction to this Surah. It is a symbol of man's own history. Man is born for toil and struggle, and this is the substantive proposition in verse 4 below, which this appeal leads up to.

2. And thou art a freeman(6131) of this City;-

6131 *Hillun:* an inhabitant, a man with lawful rights, a man freed from such obligations as would attach to a stranger to the city, a freeman in a wider sense than the technical sense to which the word is restricted in modern usage. The Prophet should have been honoured in his native city. He was actually being persecuted. He should have been loved, as a parent loves a child. Actually his life was being sought, and those who believed in him were under a ban. But time was to show that he was to come triumphant to his native city after having made Madihah sacred by his life and work.

3. And (the mystic ties of) Parent and Child;-(6132)

6132 A parent loves a child ordinarily: the father is proud and the mother, in spite of her birth pains, experiences supreme joy when the child is born. But in abnormal circumstances there may be misunderstandings, even hatred between parent and child. So Makkah cast out her most glorious son, but it was only for a time. Makkah was sound at heart; only her power had been usurped by an ignorant autocracy which passed away, and Makkah was to receive back her glory at the hands of the son whom she had rejected but whom she welcomed back later. And Makkah retains for all time her sacred character as the centre of Islam.

4. Verily We have created man into toil and struggle.(6133)

6133 *Cf.* "Man is born unto troubles as the sparks fly upward" (Job, 5:7); "For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief (Ecclesiastes, 2:23). Man's life is full of sorrow and vexation; but our text has a different shade of meaning: man is born to strive and struggle; and if he suffers from hardships, he must exercise patience, for Allah will make his way smooth for him (65:7; 94:5-6). On the other hand no man should boast of worldly goods or worldly prosperity (see verses 5-7 below).

5. Thinketh he, that none hath power over him?(6134)

6134 See the end of last note. If a man has wealth, influence, or power, he should not behave as if it is to last forever, or as if he has no responsibility for his acts and can do what he likes. All his gifts and advantages are given to him for trial. Allah, Who bestowed them on him, can take them away, and will do so if man fails in his trial.

6. He may say (boastfully); Wealth have I squandered in abundance!(6135)

6135 The man who feels no responsibility and thinks that he can do what he likes in life forgets his responsibility to Allah. He boasts of his wealth and scatters it about, thinking that he can thus purchase the support of the world. For a time he may. But a rude awakening must come soon, for he bases his hopes on unsubstantial things. Or if he spends his substance on self-indulgence, he is weakening himself and putting himself into snares that must destroy him.

7. Thinketh he that none beholdeth him?(6136)

6136 Allah watches him, and sees all his acts and motives, and all the secret springs of his follies. But lest he should think the higher spiritual forces too remote for him, let him look within himself and use the faculties which Allah has given him. See the next verses following.

8. Have We not made for him a pair of eyes?-

9. And a tongue,(6137) and a pair of lips?-

6137 The eyes give us the faculty of seeing, and may be taken in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. In the same way the tongue gives us the faculty of tasting in both senses. Along with the lips, it also enables us to speak, to ask for information and seek guidance, and to celebrate the praises of Allah.

10. And shown him the two highways?(6138)

6138 The two highways of life are: (1) the steep and difficult path of virtue, which is further described in the verses following, and (2) the easy path of vice and the rejection of Allah, referred to in verses 19-20 below. Allah has given us not only the faculties implied in the eyes, the tongue, and the lips, but also given us the judgement by which we can choose our way; and He has sent us Teachers and Guides, with Revelation, to show us the right and difficult way.

11. But he hath made no haste on the path that is steep.(6139)

6139 In spite of the faculties with which Allah has endowed man and the guidance which He has given him, man has been remiss. By no means has he been eager to follow the steep and difficult path which is for his own spiritual good. *Cf.* Matt. 7:14: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (see also 1:6 and n. 22).

12. And what will explain to thee the path that is steep?-

13. (It is:) freeing the bondman;(6140)

6140 The difficult path of virtue is defined as the path of charity or unselfish love, and three specific instances are given for our understanding: *viz.* (1) freeing the bondman, (2) feeding the orphan, and (3) feeding the indigent down in the dust. As regards the bondman, we are to understand not only a reference to legal slavery, but many other kinds of slavery which flourish especially in advanced societies. There is political slavery, industrial slavery, and social slavery. There is the slavery of conventions, of ignorance, and of superstition. There is slavery to wealth or passions or power. The good man tries to liberate men and women from all kinds of slavery, often at great danger to himself. But he begins by first liberating himself. (R).

14. Or the giving of food in a day of privation(6141)

6141 Feed those who need it, both literally and figuratively; but do so especially when there is privation or famine, literal or figurative, *i.e.,* when or where the sources of sustenance, physical, moral, or spiritual,

15. To the orphan with claims of relationship,(6142)

6142 All orphans should be fed and helped. But ordinary orphans will come under the indigent in verse 16 below. The orphans related to us have a special claim on us. They should be near and dear to us, and if charity begins at home, they have the first claim on us.

16. Or to the indigent (down) in the dust.(6143)

6143 Persons down in the dust can only be helped from motives of pure charity, because nothing can be expected of them-neither praise nor advertisement nor any other advantage to the helper. Such help is help indeed. But there may be various degrees, and the help will be suited to the needs.

17. Then will he be(6144) of those who believe, and enjoin patience, (constancy, and self-restraint), and enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion.

6144 Such practical charity and love will be the acid test of Faith and the teaching of all virtues. The virtues are summed up under the names of Patience (the Arabic word includes constancy and self-restraint) and compassionate kindness. Not only will they be the test by which the sincerity of their Faith will be judged: they will be the fruit which their Faith will constantly produce.

18. Such are the Companions of the Right Hand.(6145)

6145 *Cf.* 56:27-40, also n. 5223. They will be those who achieve salvation.

19. But those who reject Our Signs, they are the (unhappy) Companions of the Left Hand.(6146)

6146 *Cf.* 56:41-56, also n. 5223. They will be the unfortunate ones enveloped in the Fire of lasting Penalty, heaped over them and all round them.

20. **On them will be Fire vaulted over (all round).**



91. Al Shams (The Sun)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. **By the Sun(6147) and his (glorious) splendour;**

6147 Six types are taken in three pairs, from Allah's mighty works in nature, as tokens or evidence of Allah's providence and the contrasts in His sublime creation, which yet conduce to cosmic harmony (verses 1-6). Then (verses 7-8) the soul of man, with internal order and proportion in its capacities and faculties, as made by Allah, is appealed to as having been endowed with the power of discriminating between right and wrong. Then the conclusion is stated in verses 9-10, that man's success or failure, prosperity or bankruptcy, would depend upon his keeping that soul pure or his corrupting it.

2. **By the Moon(6148) as she follows him;**

6148 The first pair is the glorious sun, the source of our light and physical life, and the moon which follows or acts as second to the sun for illuminating our world. The moon, when she is in the sky with the sun, is pale and inconspicuous; in the sun's absence she shines with reflected light and may metaphorically be called the sun's vicegerent. So with Revelation and the great Prophets who brought it; and the minor Teachers who derive their light reflected, or perhaps doubly reflected, from the original source.

3. **By the Day as it(6149) shows up (the Sun´s) glory;**

6149 The next contrasted pair consists, not of luminaries, but conditions, or periods of time, Day and Night. The Day reveals the sun's glory and the Night conceals it from our sight. So there may be contrasts in our subjective reception of divine light, but it is there, working all the time, and must reappear in its own good time.

4. **By the Night as it conceals it;**

5. **By the Firmament(6150) and its (wonderful) structure;(6151)**

6150 The next contrasted pair is the wonderful firmament on high, and the earth below our feet, stretching away to our wide horizons. The sky gives us rain, and the earth gives us food. Yet both work together: for the rain is moisture sucked up from the earth, and the food cannot grow without the heat and warmth of the sun. There are many other contrasts under this head; yet they all point to unity.

6151 The *ma masdariyah* in Arabic, in this and the subsequent clauses, is best translated in English by nouns. Thus what would literally be "and the (wonderful) making or construction of it" or "the fact of its (wonderful) construction" is, idiomatically, "its (wonderful) structure." "The (wide) spreading out" of the earth is rendered "its (wide) expanse," and so on.

6. **By the Earth and its (wide) expanse:**

7. **By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it;(6152)**

6152 Allah makes the soul, and gives it order, proportion, and relative perfection, in order to adapt it for the particular circumstances in which it has to live its life. *Cf.* 32:9. See also n. 120 to 2:117. He breathes into it an understanding of what is sin, impiety, wrongdoing and what is piety and right conduct, in the special circumstances in which it may be placed. This is the most precious gift of all to man, the faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong. After the six external evidences mentioned in verses 1-6 above, this internal evidence of Allah's goodness is mentioned as the greatest of all. By these various tokens man should learn that his success, his prosperity, his salvation depends on himself-on his keeping his soul pure as Allah made it; and his failure, his decline, his perdition depends on his soiling his soul by choosing evil.

8. **And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;-**

9. **Truly he succeeds that purifies it,**

10. **And he fails that corrupts it!(6153)**

6153 This is the core of the Surah, and it is illustrated by a reference to the story of Thamud in the following verses.

11. **The Thamud (people) rejected (their prophet) through their inordinate wrongdoing,(6154)**

6154 The allusion to the story of Thamud will be understood by a reference to 7:73-79; see specially n. 1044. Their prophet was Salih but he had to deal with an arrogant people, who oppressed the poor and denied them their rights of watering and pasture for their cattle.

12. **Behold, the most wicked man among them was deputed (for impiety).(6155)**

6155 The prophet Salih made a certain she-camel a Sign or Symbol, a test case, "This she-camel of Allah is a Sign unto you; so leave her to graze in Allah's earth and let her come to no harm, or ye shall be seized with a grievous punishment" (7:73). but they plotted to kill her and sent the most wicked man among them to dare and do that deed of impiety. It was probably when she came to drink at the stream that she was hamstrung and killed. See 26:155, and 54:27.

13. **But the Messenger of Allah(6156) said to them: "It is a She-camel of Allah. And (bar her not from) having her drink!"**

6156 That is, Salih see last note.

14. **Then they rejected him (as a false prophet), and they hamstrung her.(6157) So their Lord, on account of their crime, obliterated their traces and made them equal (in destruction, high and low)!**

6157 The man who was deputed to do the impious deed of hamstringing the she-camel had, of course, the sympathy and cooperation of the whole people. Only he was more daring than the rest.

15. **And for Him(6158) is no fear of its consequences.**

6158 This verse has been variously construed. I follow the general opinion in referring the pronoun "Him" to "their Lord" in the last verse and the pronoun "its" to the Punishment that was meted out to all, high and low, equally. In that case the meaning would be: God decreed the total destruction of Thamud; in the case of creatures any such destruction might cause a loss to them, and they might fear the consequences of such loss or destruction, but Allah has created and can create at will, and there can be no question of any such apprehension in His case. An alternative view is that "him" refers to the prophet Salih, mentioned in verse 13. Then the interpretation would be: Salih had no fear of the consequences for himself; he had warned the wicked according to his commission; he was saved by Allah's mercy as a just and righteous man, and he left them with regrets (7:79). Yet

another alternative refers "him" to the wicked man (mentioned in verse 12) who hamstrung the she-camel: he feared not the consequences of his deed.



92. Al Layl (The Night)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the Night as it conceals (the light);(6159)

6159 The evidence of three things is invoked, *viz.* Night, Day, and the mystery of Sex, and the conclusion is stated in verse 4, that men's aims are diverse. But similarly there are contrasts in nature. What contrast can be greater than between Night and Day? When the Night spreads her veil, the sun's light is hidden, but not lost. The sun is in its place all the time, and will come forth in all its glory again in its own good time. *Cf.* 91:3, 4, and n. 6149. Man pursuing diverse aims may find, owing to his own position, Allah's light obscured from him for a time, but he must strive hard to put himself in a position to reach it in all its glory.

2. By the Day as it appears in glory;

3. By (the mystery of)(6160) the creation of male and female;-(6161)

6160 *Ma al masdariyah* as in 91:5-7; see there n. 6151.

6161 The mystery of the sexes runs through all life. There is attraction between opposites; each performs its own functions, having special characters, primary and secondary, within limited spheres, and yet both have common characteristics in many other spheres. Each is indispensable to the other. Love in its noblest sense is the type of heavenly love and the highest good; in its debasement it leads to the lowest sins and the worst crimes. Here, then, striving is necessary for the highest good.

4. Verily, (the ends) ye strive for are diverse.(6162)

6162 There are wide contrasts in the nature and aims of men. These may be broadly divided into two classes, good and evil. As night replaces day on account of certain relative positions, but does not annihilate it, so evil may for a time obscure good but cannot blot it out. Again, night in certain circumstances *(e.g.* for rest) is a blessing; do certain things, which seek the highest truth from the light of Allah. Considering these contrasts, do not be surprised or depressed. Men's immediate aims may be different. The duty of all is to seek the one true Light.

5. So he who gives (in charity) and fears ((Allah)),

6. And (in all sincerity) testifies to the Best,-(6163)

6163 The good are distinguished here by three signs: (1) large-hearted sacrifices for Allah and men: (2) fear of Allah, which shows itself in righteous conduct, for *Taqwa* (see n. 26 to 2:2) includes just action as well as a mental state: and (3) truth and sincerity in recognising and supporting all that is morally beautiful, for *Husn* is the good as well as the beautiful.

7. We will indeed make smooth for him the path to Bliss.(6164)

6164 So far from there being any hardship in a good life, the righteous will enjoy their life more and more, and Allah will make their path smoother and smoother until they reach eventual Bliss.

8. But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient,

9. And gives the lie to the Best,-(6165)

6165 The evil are distinguished here by three signs: (1) selfish greed and denial of other people's rights; (2) arrogance and self-sufficiency (96:6-7); and (3) knowingly dishonouring *Truth* out of spite, or seeing ugliness where there is beauty. Such men's downward progress gathers momentum as they go, and their end can be nothing but Misery. Where will be their boasted wealth and possessions, or their self-confidence?

10. We will indeed make smooth for him the path to Misery;

11. Nor will his wealth profit him when he falls headlong (into the Pit).(6166)

6166 Wealth amassed in this world will be of no use at the Day of Final Judgement, nor will any material advantages of this life bring profit by themselves in the spiritual world. What will count will be a life of truth and righteousness, and of goodness to all the creatures of Allah.

12. Verily We take(6167) upon Ourselves to guide,

6167 Allah in His infinite mercy has provided full guidance to His creatures. All through His creation there are sign posts indicating the right way. To man He has given the five senses of perception, with mental and spiritual faculties for co-ordinating his physical perceptions and leading him higher and higher in thought and feeling. He has besides sent inspired men for further teaching and guidance.

13. And verily unto Us (belong) the End and the Beginning.(6168)

6168 In the End man will return to Allah, and even from the beginning of man's life Allah's mercies and loving care surround him. In the probationary period of man's life, he has a measure of free will, and he is expected to use it in such a way as to bring his whole being into harmony with the universal Will and Law. For he will have to answer for the right use of his talents and opportunities. If man's will has any meaning, he has the choice of accepting Allah's guidance or rejecting it, and in the latter case he must take the consequences. Hence the warning of the future "Fire" in the next verse.

14. Therefore do I warn you of a Fire blazing fiercely;

15. None shall reach it(6169) but those most unfortunate ones

6169 The Fire of Punishment will not reach any except those who have deliberately sinned against their conscience and rejected Allah's Truth. The term used for them is *"Ashqa"* (superlative degree). *Cf.* 87:11. The corresponding idea in Christian theology is expressed in the following sentence. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men" (Matt, xii. 31). (R).

16. Who give the lie to Truth and turn their backs.

17. But those most devoted to Allah shall be(6170) removed far from it,-

6170 "Those most devoted to Allah": the *Atqa,* the God-fearing men who live lives of purity, and seek only for the "Face of their Lord Most High". See the verses following.

18. Those who spend their wealth(6171) for increase in self-purification,(6172)

6171 The spending may be for charity, or for good works, such as advancing the cause of knowledge or science, or supporting ideals, etc. *"Wealth"* must be understood not only for money or material goods, but also for any advantage or opportunity which a man happens to enjoy, and which he can place at the service of others.

6172 The Arabic root word *zaka* implies both increase and purification, and both meanings may be understood to be implied here. Wealth (understood both literally and metaphorically) is not for selfish enjoyment or idle show. It is held on trust. It may be a trial in itself, from which a man who emerges successfully is a man all the purer in his life; and even if he was a good man before, his proper use of his wealth increases his position and dignity in the moral and spiritual world.

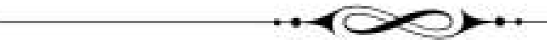
19. And have in their minds no favour from anyone for which a reward is expected in return,(6173)

6173 The good man does not give in charity or do his good deeds with the motive that he is returning someone else's favour and compensating and rewarding someone for some service done to him or expecting some reward in return for his own good deed: the sole motive in his mind is that he desires the Countenance or Good Pleasure of Allah Most High. This "Countenance" or "Face" (Arabic, *Wajh)* implies good pleasure or approval; but it implies something more. It also means the Cause-either the "final cause" or the "efficient cause" of Aristotelian philosophy. For the *Atqa* would refer everything, backwards in origin and forwards in destiny, to Allah. Allah is the source of their goodness, as well as its goal or purpose.

20. But only the desire to seek for the Countenance of their Lord Most High;(6174)

6174 The definition of Righteousness, Charity, or Self-sacrifice, becomes thus highly spiritualised. The *Atqa* are so completely identified with Allah's Will that everything else is blotted out to tern. What would seem to be sacrifice from other points of view, becomes their own highest pleasure and satisfaction. Every virtuous man will have his own bliss, for there are degrees in virtue and bliss. This supreme bliss is the portion-not the prize-of supreme virtue. (R).

21. And soon will they attain (complete) satisfaction.



93. Al Duha (The Glorious Morning Light)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the Glorious Morning Light,(6175)

6175 The full morning light of the sun, when its splendour shines forth in contrast with the night which has passed. *Cf. 91:1.* The growing hours of morning light, from sunrise to noon, are the true type of the growth of spiritual life and work, while the stillness of the night is, to those who know, only a preparation for it. We are not to imagine that the stillness or quiescence of the night is wasted, or means stagnation in our spiritual life. The stillness may seem lonely, but we are not alone, nor forsaken by Allah. Nor is such preparation, without immediate visible results, a sign of Allah's displeasure.

2. And by the Night(6176) when it is still,-

6176 *Cf.* 92:1-2. There Night is mentioned first, and Day second, to enforce the lesson of contrasts: the veil of the night naturally comes first before the splendour of daylight is revealed. Here the argument is different: the growing hours of morning light are the main thing and are mentioned first; while the hours of preparation and quiescence, which are subordinate, come second.

3. Thy Guardian-Lord hath not forsaken thee,(6177) nor is He displeased.(6178)

6177 As usual, there is the particular assurance to the Prophet, and the general assurance to mankind: see the Introduction to this Surah. The early years of the Prophet's ministry might well have seemed blank. After inspiration there were days and periods of waiting. A sense of loneliness might well have weighed on his mind. His own tribe of Quraysh jeered at him, taunted and threatened him, and slandered and persecuted him as well as those who believed in him. But his faith was never shaken, not even to the extent of that cry of agony of Jesus: "My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?": (Mark, 16:34). Much less did it enter the Prophet's mind to think that Allah was angry with him, as the taunts of his enemies suggested.

6178 See last note. The more general meaning is similar. To the man who prepares for spiritual work and spiritual growth the chief thing is typified by the growing hours of the morning. He should not be discouraged, nor overcome with a sense of loneliness in his early struggles or difficulties. The end will crown his work. Allah's care is always around him. If unsympathetic or hostile critics laugh at him or taunt him with being "mad" or "old-fashioned" or "ploughing his lonely furrow", his steady faith will uphold him. He will never believe that his earnest and sincere devotion to Allah, whatever be its results in this world, can be anything but pleasing to Allah.

4. And verily the Hereafter will be better for thee than the present.(6179)

6179 To the truly devout man, each succeeding moment is better than the one preceding it. In this sense the "hereafter" refers not only to the Future Life after death, but also to "the soul of goodness in things" in this very life. For even though some outward trappings of this shadow world may be wanting, his soul is filled with more and more satisfaction as he goes on.

5. And soon will thy Guardian-Lord give thee (that wherewith) thou shalt be well-pleased.(6180)

6180 Allah's good pleasure is sure when we serve Him. But we are assured that even our feelings of doubt and suffering will vanish, and we shall have a sense of complete satisfaction, contentment, and active pleasure when our will is identified with the Will of Allah.

6. Did He not find thee(6181) an orphan and give thee shelter (and care)?(6182)

6181 Judge the future from the past. Allah has been good to you in your past experience: trust His goodness in the future also. Again, there is a particular and a general meaning. Three facts are taken from the Prophet's outer life by way of illustration. Metaphorically they also apply to us. And further, the outer facts are themselves types for the spiritual life. See notes below.

6182 (1) There is the case of the orphan, literally and figuratively. Our Prophet was himself an orphan. His father 'Abd Allah died young before the child was born, leaving no property. The Prophet's mother Aminah was in ailing health, and he was chiefly brought up by his nurse Halimah. His mother herself died when he was only six years old. His aged grandfather 'Abd al Muttalib treated him as his own son, but died two years later. Thereafter his uncle Abu Talib treated him as his own son. He was thus an orphan in more senses than one, and yet the love he received from each one pf these persons was greater than ordinary parental love. Each one of us is an orphan in some sense or another, and yet someone's love and shelter come to us by the grace of Allah. In the spiritual world there is no father or mother: our very first sustenance and shelter must come from the grace of Allah.

7. And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance.(6183)

6183 (2) The Prophet was born in the midst of the idolatry and polytheism of Makkah, in a family which was the custodian of this false worship. He wandered in quest of Unity and found it by the guidance of Allah. There is no implication whatever of sin or error on his part. But we may err and find ourselves wandering in mazes of error, in thought, motive, or understanding: we must pray for Allah's grace ever to give us guidance.

The Arabic root *dalla* has various shades of meaning. In 1:7, I have translated it by the verb "stray". In 53:2 the Prophet is defended from the charge of being "astray" or straying in mind. In 12:8 and 12:95 Jacob's sons use the word for their aged father, to suggest that he was senile and wandering in mind. In 32:10 it is used of the dead, and I have translated it "hidden and lost" (in the earth).

8. And He found thee in need, and made thee independent.(6184)

6184 (3) The Prophet inherited no wealth and was poor. The true, pure, and sincere love of Khadijah not only raised him above want, but made him independent of worldly needs in his later life, enabling him to devote his whole time to the service of Allah. So do we all find ourselves in some want or another, which, if we work wholeheartedly and sincerely is supplied to us by the grace of Allah. When we have found the Way, it is a laborious task to climb up in our poverty of spiritual equipment: Allah will give us spiritual riches in love and knowledge.

9. Therefore, treat not(6185) the orphan with harshness,

6185 Verses 9-11 carry, to a step further, the triple argument of verses 6-8, as explained in the preceding notes. The Prophet treated all orphans with tender affection and respect, setting an example to his contemporaries, who frequently took advantage of the helpless position of orphans, and in any case looked upon them as subordinate creatures to be repressed and kept in their place. Such an attitude is common in all ages. Helpless creatures ought, on the contrary, to be treated as sacred trusts, whether they are orphans, or dependants, or creatures of any kind unable to assert themselves, either through age, sex, social rank, artificial conditions, or any cause whatever.

10. Nor repulse the petitioner (Unheard);(6186)

6186 Then there are the people who come with petitions-who have to ask for something. They may be genuine beggars asking for financial help, or ignorant people asking for knowledge, or timid people asking for some lead or encouragement. The common attitude is to scorn them or repulse them. The scorn may be shown even when alms or assistance is given to them. Such an attitude is wrong. Charity is of no moral value without sympathy and love. Nor is it charity to give to idle sturdy professional beggars, for show or to get rid of them. They are mere parasites on society. Every petition should be examined and judged on its merits.

11. But the bounty of the Lord - rehearse and proclaim!(6187)

6187 Besides the petitioners, who ask for help, there is the case of those who do not ask but are nevertheless poor-poor but contented in worldly goods, or poor in knowledge or resources and not even knowing that they are poor. If you are bountifully endowed by Allah, your duty is to make that Bounty spread far and wide. Proclaim it and share it, as the Prophet always did. Spiritually we all belong to one of these three classes in one sense or another-orphans, petitioners, and victims of poverty. We all receive Allah's grace and guidance in some degree or other. We all owe it as a duty to our fellow-men to be kind and helpful to those less endowed in any respect than ourselves.



94. Al Sharh or Al Inshirah (The Expansion of the Breast)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Have We not expanded thee thy breast?-(6188)

6188 *Cf.* the prayer of Moses in 20:25. The breast is symbolically the seat of knowledge and the highest feelings of love and affection , the treasure house in which are stored thejewels of that quality of human character which approaches nearest to the divine. The Prophet's human nature had been purified, expanded, and elevated, so that he became a Mercy to all Creation. Such a nature could afford to ignore the lower motives of ordinary humanity which caused shameful attacks to be made on him. Its strength and courage could also bear the burden of the galling work which it had to do in denouncing sin, subduing it, and protecting Allah's creatures from its oppression.

2. And removed from thee thy burden(6189)

6189 See last note. It is indeed a grievous and galling burden for a man to fight single-handed against sin. But Allah sends His grace and aid, and that burden is removed, or converted into joy and triumph in the service of the One True God.

3. The which did gall thy back?-

4. And raised high the esteem (in which) thou (art held)?(6190)

6190 The Prophet's virtues, the magnanimity of his character, and his love for mankind were fully recognised even in his lifetime, and his name stands highest among the heroic leaders of mankind. The phrase used is more comprehensive in meaning than that used for various prophets in 37:119 etc.: "We left this blessing for them among generations to come in later times".

5. So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief:(6191)

6191 This verse is repeated for extra emphasis. Whatever difficulties or troubles are encountered by men, Allah always provides a solution, a way out, a relief, a way to lead to ease and happiness, if we only follow His Path and show our Faith by patience and well-doing . The solution or relief does not merely come *after* the Difficulty: it is provided *with* it I understand the definite article in al 'usr in a generic sense, and translate: "every difficulty", In 92:7, I have translated *Yusr* a s , Bliss, and in 92:10 *'Usr* as Misery.

6. Verily, with every difficulty there is relief.

7. Therefore, when thou art free (from thine immediate task), still labour hard,(6192)

6192 *When thou art free:* or when thou art relieved. The words understood may be: from thy immediate task, that of preaching to men, denouncing sin, and encouraging righteousness; or, from the difficulties that confronted thee. When that happens, that does not finish the labours of the man of Allah. It is only one step to them. He has constantly and insistently to go on. When there is rest from the task of instructing the world, the contact with the spiritual kingdom continues, and indeed it becomes more intimate and concentrated.

8. And to thy Lord turn (all) thy attention.(6193)

6193 The kingdom of Allah is everything. Other things are incidental, and really do not matter. Worldly greatness or success may be a means to an end, but it may also be a hindrance to true spiritual greatness. Allah is the goal of the righteous man's whole attention and desire.

95. Al Tin (The Fig)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the Fig(6194) and the Olive,(6195)

6194 The substantive proposition is in verse 4-8, and it is clinched by an appeal to four sacred symbols. *viz.,* the Fig, the Olive, Mount Sinai, and the sacred City of Makkah . About the precise interpretation of the first two symbols, and especially of the symbol of the Fig, there is much difference of opinion. If we take the Fig literally to refer to the fruit or the tree, it can stand as a symbol of man's destiny in many ways. Under cultivation it can be one of the finest, most delicious, and most wholesome fruits in existence: in its wild state, it is nothing but tiny seeds, and is insipid, and often full of worms and maggots. So man at his best has a noble destiny: at his worst, he is "the lowest of the low". Christ is said to have cursed a fig tree for having only leaves, and not producing fruit (Matt. 21:18-29), enforcing the same lesson. There is also a parable of the fig tree in Matt. 24:32-35. See also the parable of the good and evil figs in Jeremiah, 24:1-10. But see n. 6198 below.

6195 For the sacred symbolism of the Olive, see n. 2880 to 23:20, and notes 3000-3002 to 24:35, where the parable of Allah's Light includes a reference to the Olive. But it is possible that the Olive here refers to the Mount of Olives, just outside the walls of the City of Jerusalem (see n. 5038 to 52:2), for this is the scene in the Gospel story (Matt. 24:3-4) of Christ's description of the Judgement to come.

2. And the Mount of Sinai,(6196)

6196 This was the Mountain on which the Law was given to Moses. See 19:52, and n. 2504. The Law was given, and the glory of Allah was made visible. But did Israel faithfully obey the Law thereafter?

3. And this City(6197) of security,-(6198)

6197 "This City of security" is undoubtedly Makkah. Even in Pagan times its sacred character was respected, and no fighting was allowed in its territory. But the same City, with all its sacred associations, persecuted the greatest of the Prophets and gave itself up for a time to idolatry and sin, thus presenting the contrast of the best and the worst.

6198 Having discussed the four symbols in detail, let us consider them together. It is clear that they refer to Allah's Light or Revelation, which offers man the highest destiny if he will follow the Way. Makkah stands for Islam, Sinai for Israel , and the Mount of Olives for Christ's original and pure Message. It has been suggested that the Fig stands for the *Ficus Indica,* the Bo-tree, under which Gautama Buddha obtained Nirvana. I hesitate to adopt the suggestion, but if accepted it would cover pristine Buddhism and the ancient Vedic religions from which it was an offshoot. In this way all the great religions of the world would be indicated. But even if we refer the Fig and the Olive to the symbolism in their fruit, and not to any particular religion, the contrast of Best and Worst in man's destiny remains, and that is the main thing.

This raises a doctrinal question of considerable importance: how does Islam view the ancient vedic religions and Buddhism, or for that matter, any other religion? As Muslims we are not in a position to affirm whether Budha was a prophet or not. Although the Qur'an states that Allah sent Prophets to every people (35:24), it does not mention the names of all of them. In fact it mentions by name relatively few of the Prophets of the Semitic tradition, or only such as with whom its first audience, the Arabs were generally familiar. As to its present form, we find the doctrines of Buddhism clearly at variance with monotheism and cardinal Principles of the True Religion as explained in the Qur'an. This may have been the result of distortion or loss by the followers of its original teachings.

As a general rule, we cannot describe anyone as a Prophet or Messenger of Allah unless explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, or Hadith. The Message as brought by Prophet Muhammad preserves in itself all that was essential in the earlier revelations or scriptures: it abrogates all the previous messages sent through earlier Prophets (3:85). (R).

4. We have indeed created man in the best of moulds,(6199)

6199 *Taqwim:* mould, symmetry, form, nature, constitution. There is no fault in Allah's creation. To man Allah gave the purest and best nature, and man's duty is to preserve the pattern on which Allah has made him: 30:30. But by making him His vicegerent, Allah exalted him *in posse* even higher than the angels, for the angels had to make obeisance to him (2:30-34, and n. 48). But man's position as vicegerent also gives him will and discretion, and if he uses them wrongly he falls even lower than the beasts. See next note.

5. Then do We abase him (to be) the lowest of the low,-(6200)

6200 This verse should be read with the next. If man rebels against Allah, and follows after evil, he will be abased to the lowest possible position. For Judgement is sure. Those who use their faculties aright and follow Allah's Law will reach the high and noble destiny intended for them. That reward will not be temporary, but unfailing.

6. Except such as believe and do righteous deeds: For they shall have a reward unfailing.

7. Then what can, after this, contradict thee,(6201) as to the judgment (to come)?

6201 *Thee:* may refer to the Prophet, or to man collectively. *After this: i.e.,* when it is clearly shown to you that Allah created man true and pure, that He guides him, and that those who rebel and break His law will be punished and brought down in the Hereafter, who can doubt this, or contradict the Prophet when he gives warning?

8. Is not Allah the wisest of Judges?(6202)

6202 Allah is wise and just. Therefore the righteous have nothing to fear, but the evil ones cannot escape punishment.

96. Al Alaq (The Clinging Clot) or Iqra' (Read!)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Proclaim! (or Read!)(6203) in the name(6204) of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created-

6203 *Iqra'may* mean "read", or "recite or rehearse", or "proclaim aloud", the object understood being Allah's Message. For an account of the circumstances in which this first revelation-the divine commission to preach and proclaim Allah's Message came to the Prophet, in the cave of Hira ', see C. 27-31. In worldly letters he was unversed, but with spiritual knowledge his mind and soul were filled, and now had come the time when he must stand forth to the world and declare his mission.

6204 The declaration or proclamation was to be in the name of Allah the Creator. It was not for any personal benefit to the Prophet: to him there was to come bitter persecution, sorrow, and suffering. It was the call of Allah for the benefit of erring humanity. Allah is mentioned by his tide of "thy Lord and Cherisher", to establish a direct nexus between the source of the Message and the one addressed. The Message was not merely an abstract proposition of philosophy, but the direct concrete message of a personal Allah to the creatures whom He loves and cherishes. *Thy* addressed to the Prophet is appropriate in two ways: (1) he was in direct contact with the divine Messenger (Gabriel) and Him Who sent the Messenger; (2) he represented the whole of humanity, in a fuller sense than that in which Christ Jesus is the "Son of Man".

2. Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood:(6205)

6205 *Cf.* 23:14. The lowly origin of the animal in man is contrasted with the high destiny offered to him in his intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature by his "most bountiful" Creator. No knowledge is withheld from man. On the contrary, through the faculties freely given to him, he acquires it in such measure as outstrips his immediate understanding, and leads him ever to strive for newer and newer meaning.

3. Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful,-

4. He Who taught (the use of) the Pen,-(6206)

6206 The symbol of a permanent revelation is the mystic Pen and the mystic Record. See n. 5593 to 68:1.

The Arabic words for "teach" and "knowledge" are from the same root. It is impossible to produce in a Translation the complete orchestral harmony of the words for "read", "teach", "pen" (which implies reading, writing, books, study, research), "knowledge" (including science, self knowledge, spiritual understanding), and "proclaim", an alternative meaning of the word for "to read". This proclaiming or reading implies not only the duty of blazoning forth Allah's message, as going with the prophetic office, but also the duty of promulgation and wide dissemination of fhe Truth by all who read and understand it. The comprehensive meaning of *qara'* refers not only to a particular person and occasion but also gives a universal direction. And this kind of comprehensive meaning, as we have seen, runs throughout the Qur'an—for those who will understand.

5. Taught man that which he knew not.(6207)

6207 Allah teaches us new knowledge at every given moment. Individuals learn more and more day by day; nations and humanity at large learn fresh knowledge at every stage. This is even more noticeable and important in the spiritual world.

6. Day, but man doth transgress all bounds,(6208)

6208 All our knowledge and capacities come as gifts from Allah. But man, in his inordinate vanity and insolence, mistakes Allah's gifts for his own achievements. The gifts may be strength or beauty, wealth, position, or power, or the more subtle gifts of knowledge or talents in individuals-or Science, or Art, or Government, or Organisation for mankind in general.

7. In that he looketh upon himself as self-sufficient.

8. Verily, to thy Lord is the return (of all).(6209)

6209 Man is not self-sufficient, either as an individual, or in his collective capacity. If he arrogates Allah's gifts to himself, he is reminded-backwards, of his lowly physical origin (from a drop of animal matter), and forwards, of his responsibility and final return to Allah.

9. Seest thou one who forbids-(6210)

6210 The words, may be applied generally to perverse humanity, which seeks not only to rebel against Allah's Law, but also to prevent others from following it. There may however be a reference here to Abu Jahl, an inveterate enemy of Islam, who used, in its early days, to insult and persecute the Prophet and those who followed his teaching. He used, in particular, to use shameful methods to prevent the Prophet from going to the Ka'bah for devotions, and forbid any who came under his influence, from offering prayers or performing devotions. He was arrogant and purse-proud and met his end in the battle of Badr.

10. A votary when he (turns) to pray?

11. Seest thou if(6211) he is on (the road of) Guidance?-

6211 Man's insolence leads to two results: (1) self-destruction through self-misleading; (2) a false example or false guidance to others. The righteous man must therefore test human example or human guidance by the question, "Is there Allah's guidance behind it?" And risible light would be thrown on it by the question, "Does it lead to righteousness?" A flouting of Allah and Allah's truth answers the first question in the negative, and conduct which turns back from the eternal principles of Right answers the second.

12. Or enjoins Righteousness?

13. Seest thou if he(6212) denies (Truth) and turns away?

6212 The usual trick of the ungodly is to refuse to face Truth. If they are placed in a corner, they deny what is obvious to reasonable men, and turn their backs.

14. Knoweth he not that Allah doth see?

15. Let him beware! If he desist not, We will drag him by the forelock,-(6213)

6213 *Cf.* 11:56, and n. 1551. The forelock is on the forehead, and is thus symbolical of the summit and crown of the man's power or dignity. To be dragged by it is to suffer the lowest dregs of humiliation. *Nasfa'an* is a syncopated form of the emphatic first person plural.

16. A lying, sinful forelock!

17. Then, let him call (for help) to his council(6214) (of comrades):

6214 The Pagan Quraysh, who formed an oppressive junta or council to manage the Ka'bah were in sympathy with Abu J ahl, though they did not go to the unbridled lengths to which Abu J ahl went. But they could not, all combined, resist the onward march of the divine mission, though they did all they could to check it.

18. We will call on the angels of punishment (to deal with him)!(6215)

6215 All the combined forces of evil, though they may have worldly appearances in their favour, and though they may seem to be successful for a time, cannot stand against Allah. He has but to command His forces of punishment to exert themselves, and they will subdue evil, protect Allah's votaries and justify the faith for which the votaries suffer.

19. Day, heed him not: But bow down in adoration, and bring thyself the closer (to Allah)!(6216)

6216 The righteous man has no fear. He can disregard all the forces of evil that are brought against him. But he must learn humility: that is his defence. He will bow down in adoration to Allah. He must have the will to bring *himself closer* to Allah. For Allah is always close to him,-closer to him than his life blood in the

jugular vein, (50:16). Man's humility and adoration remove him from being an insolent rebel on the one hand and, on the other, prepare his will to realise his nearness to Allah.



97. Al Qadr (The Night of Power or Honour)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power:(6217)

6217 *Cf.* 44:3 and n. 4690. The 23rd, 25th or 27th night of Ramadan, as well as other nights, have been suggested as the Night of Power. See, however, the Introduction to this Surah. It is best to take this in the mystic sense, which also accords with verse 3 below, which says that the Night of Power is better than a thousand Months. It transcends Time: for it is Allah's Power dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance, by His Revelation, in every kind of affair . (R) .

2. And what will explain to thee what the night of power is?

3. The Night of Power is better than a thousand Months.(6218)

6218 "A thousand" must be taken in an indefinite sense, as denoting a very long period of time. *Cf.* notes 3632 and 3634 to 32:4-5, and n. 5678 to 70:4. This does not refer to our ideas of time, but to "timeless Time". One moment of enlightenment under Allah's Light is better than thousands of months or years of animal life, and such a moment converts the night of darkness into a period of spiritual glory.

4. Therein come down the angels and the Spirit(6219) by Allah.s permission, on every errand:

6219 *The Spirit:* usually understood to be the angel Gabriel, the Spirit of Inspiration. (R).

5. Peace!...This until the rise of Morn!(6220)

6220 When the Night of spiritual darkness is dissipated by the glory of Allah, a wonderful Peace and a sense of Security arise in the soul. And this lasts on until this life closes, and the glorious Day of the new spiritual world dawns, when everything will be on a different plane, and the chequered nights and days of this world will be even less than a dream.



98. Al Bayyinah (The Clear Evidence)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Those who reject (Truth), among the People of the Book(6221) and among the Polytheists,(6222) were not going to depart (from their ways) until there should come to them Clear Evidence,-(6223)

6221 The People of the Book immediately referred to are the Jews and the Christians, who had received scriptures in the same line of prophecy in which came our Prophet. Their scriptures should have prepared them for the advent of the greatest and last of the Prophets. For the Jewish scriptures promised to the Jews, cousins or brethren to the Arabs, a prophet like Moses: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15). And Christ promised a Comforter (John, 14:16; 15:26; and 16:7; see my n. 5438 to 61:6) almost by name. The People of the Book fell from the true, straight, and standard religion, into devious ways, and would not come to the true Path until (they said) they were convinced by the arrival of the promised Prophet. But when the promised Prophet came in the person of Muhammad, they rejected him, because they really did not seek for Truth but only followed their own fancies and desires.

6222 The Polytheists, the Pagans, had not previously believed in any scriptures. But yet, when clear evidence came to them, they should have believed. Yet they rejected the Prophet because they were not really searching for Truth, but were only following their own fancies and desires.

6223 The Clear Evidence was the Prophet himself, his life, his personality, and his teaching.

2. An messenger from Allah, rehearsing scriptures(6224) kept pure and Holy:(6225)

6224 *Cf.* 2:151.

6225 *Cf.* 80:13-16.

3. Wherein are laws (or decrees) right and straight.(6226)

6226 *Qayyimah:* straight, as opposed to crooked; standard as opposed to irregular; definite and permanent, as opposed to casual or temporary. *Cf.* 9:36; 12:40; etc.

4. Nor did the People of the Book make schisms,(6227) until after there came to them Clear Evidence.

6227 The responsibility of the People of the Book is greater than that of Pagans, because the People of the Book had been prepared for the standard and straight Religion by the revelations which they had already received. Yet, when the clear evidence came in Islam, they resisted it. And what is this standard and straight Religion, free of all ambiguity, and free of all casual rights and ceremonies? They are summed up in three eternal principles, as explained in the next verse and the next note.

5. And they have been commanded no more than this:(6228) To worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith);(6229) to establish regular prayer; and to practise regular charity; and that is the Religion Right and Straight.(6230)

6228 The three eternal principles of Religion are: (1) sincere devotion to Allah; (2) Prayer and Praise as drawing man nearer to Allah and to the spiritual world; and (3) the service of Allah's creatures by deeds of practical charity.

6229 *Hanif: see* n. 134 to 2:135.

6230 Seen. 6226 above.

6. Those who reject (Truth), among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists, will be in Hell-Fire, to dwell therein (for aye). They are the worst of creatures.(6231)

6231 To be given the faculty of discrimination between right and wrong, and men to reject truth and right, is the worst folly which a creature endowed with will can commit. It must necessarily bring its own punishment, whether the creature calls himself one of the children of Abraham or one of the redeemed of Christ, or whether he goes by the mere light of nature and reason as a Pagan. Honour in the sight of Allah is not due to race or professions of faith, but to sincere and righteous conduct (49:13).

7. Those who have faith and do righteous deeds,- they are the best of creatures.(6232)

6232 Contrast this with the preceding verse. Human beings who live a life of faith and good justify the purpose of their probation here. They attain the fulfillment of their highest hopes. (R).

8. Their reward is with Allah. Gardens of Eternity, beneath which rivers flow; they will dwell therein for ever; Allah well pleased with them, and they with Him:(6233) all this for such as fear their Lord and Cherisher.(6234)

6233 The Good Pleasure of Allah is the final Bliss of Salvation. The good pleasure is mutual; the truly saved is he whose will has become completely identified with Allah's Universal Will. (R).

6234 The fear of Allah is the fear to offend against His Holy Law, the fear to do anything which is against His Holy Will. Such fear is akin to love; for with it dawns the consciousness of Allah's loving care for all His creatures.



99. Al Zalzalah (The Earthquake)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. When the earth is shaken to her (utmost) convulsion,(6235)

6235 To the ordinary human observer a violent earthquake is a terrifying phenomenon, in its suddenness, in its mysterious origin, and in its power to destroy and uproot the strongest buildings and to bring up strange materials from the bowels of the earth. The Overwhelming Event (S. 88) which ushers in the Judgement will be a bigger and more far-reaching convulsion than any earthquakes that we know. And yet the incidents of earthquakes may give us some idea of that supreme world-shaking Event.

2. And the earth throws up her burdens (from within),(6236)

6236 An earthquake, if accompanied by a volcanic eruption, throws up enormous boulders and lava from beneath the crust of the earth. They are thrown up as if they were a burden to the Earth personified. They may be all kinds of minerals, or treasures buried for secrecy. So in the great and final Convulsion, the dead who had been buried and forgotten will rise; matters and motives which had been secretly hidden and metaphorically buried will be brought to the light of day, and justice will be done in the full glare of absolute Truth.

3. And man cries (distressed): ´What is the matter with it?´-(6237)

6237 The puzzled agony suffered by the victims of violent earthquakes is as nothing compared to the experience of the new and wonderful world which will then open out to the gaze of man.

4. On that Day will she declare her tidings:

5. For that thy Lord will have given her inspiration.(6238)

6238 The present order may he personified as the earth. It will pass away, but the Deeds done therein, even the most secret, will be brought to the full light of day. And this will be because Allah will give the Command, the inspiration or Word, by which alone all events do proceed. The "inspiration" is the Command or direction conveyed by instruction breathed into the Earth personified: it is directed to tell the whole story of what it knows. *Cf.* 16:68, n. 2097.

6. On that Day will men proceed in companies sorted out,(6239) to be shown the deeds that they (had done).

6239 In this world good and evil are mixed together. But then they will be sorted out, and each grade of good and evil will be sorted out. So they will proceed in companies to receive judgement. And they will be shown the exact import of everything that they had thought, said, or done, in this life of probation, however they may have concealed or misinterpreted it in this life. Everything will be considered in taking the account, and the account will convince the persons concerned themselves.

7. Then shall anyone who has done an atom´s weight(6240) of good, see it!

6240 *Dharrah:* the weight of an ant, the smallest living weight an ordinary man can think of. Figuratively the subtlest form of good and evil will then be brought to account, and it will be done openly and convincingly: he "shall see it".

8. And anyone who has done an atom´s weight of evil, shall see it.

100. Al 'Adiyat (Those That Run)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By the (Steeds)(6241) that run, with panting (breath),

6241 The substantive proposition is in verses 6-8 below, and the metaphors and symbols enforcing the lesson are in verses 1-5 here. These symbols have at least three layers of mystic meaning: (1) Look at the chargers (mares or swift camels) panting for war on behalf of their masters. Off they go, striking fire with their hoofs by night at the behest of their riders; they push home the charge in the morning, chivalrously giving the enemy the benefit of daylight; and regardless of flashing steel or the weapons of their enemies they boldly penetrate into the midst of their foe, risking their lives for the Cause. Does unregenerate man show that fidelity to his Lord Allah? On the contrary he is ungrateful to Allah; he shows that by his deeds; he is violently in love with wealth and gain and things that perish. (2) By the figure of metonymy the brave fidelity of the war horse may stand for that of the brave and true men who rally to the standard of Allah and carry it to victory, contrasted with the poltroonery and pettiness of unregenerate man. (3) The whole conflict, fighting, and victory, may be applied to spiritual warfare against those who are caught and overwhelmed by the camp of Evil.

2. And strike sparks of fire,(6242)

6242 With their hoofs. If we suppose the march to be in the dead of night, the sparks of fire would be still more conspicuous.

3. And push home the charge in the morning,(6243)

6243 We may suppose a surprise attack, but yet a chivalrous attack by daylight. The foe is punished through his own lethargy and unpreparedness, apart from the strength, fire, and spirit of the forces of righteousness.

4. And raise the dust in clouds the while,(6244)

6244 The clouds of dust typify the ignorance and confusion in the minds of those who oppose Truth.

5. And penetrate forthwith into the midst (of the foe) en masse;-(6245)

6245 The forces of evil mass themselves for strength, but their massing itself may become a means of their speedy undoing.

6. Truly man is, to his Lord,(6246) ungrateful;

6246 Man, *i.e.,* unregenerate man, in contrast to those who receive guidance and wage unceasing war with Evil, is ungrateful to his Lord and Cherisher, Him Who created him and sustains him, and sends His blessings and favours at all times. The ingratitude may be shown by thoughts, words, and deeds-by forgetting or denying Allah and His goodness, by misusing His gifts, or by injustice to His creatures. He is in this respect worse than the war horse that risks his life in the service of his master.

7. And to that (fact) he bears witness (by his deeds);(6247)

6247 Man himself, by his conduct, proves the charge of treason against himself.

8. And violent is he in his love of wealth.(6248)

6248 What an evil choice he makes in committing treason against his own Benefactor by going after the petty baubles of this world's wealth of fleeting gains?

9. Does he not know,- when that which is in the graves is scattered abroad(6249)

6249 Dead bodies, secret plots, evil thoughts and imaginings, long since buried, will yet stand forth before the Judgement Seat of Allah. Instead of being closely hidden or blotted out-as they will have been from the consciousness of mankind-they will stand out as from the consciousness of Allah, which is all-embracing and never suffers from sleep or fatigue.

10. And that which is (locked up) in (human) breasts is made manifest-

11. That their Lord had been Well-acquainted with them, (even to) that Day.?(6250)

6250 Allah's knowledge is full and vigilant at all times. But on that day it will reveal to men secrets which they had long forgotten; for the Book of their Deeds will be made manifest at Judgement.



101. Al Qari'ah (The Great Calamity)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. The (Day) of Noise and Clamour:(6251)

6251 The Day of Noise and Clamour is the Day of Judgement, when the whole of the present order of things will be overthrown with a tremendous convulsion. *Cf.* n. 6235 to 99:1, and n. 6096 to 88:1. AJ] our present landmarks will be lost. It will be a stunning experience to begin with, but it will inaugurate a new world of true and permanent values, in which every human deed will have its true and just consequences, as if weighed in the balance. See verses 6-11 below.

2. What is the (Day) of Noise and Clamour?

3. And what will explain to thee what the (Day) of Noise and Clamour is?

4. (It is) a Day whereon men will be like moths scattered about,(6252)

6252 Moths are frail light things. To see them scattered about in a violent storm gives some idea of the confusion, distress, and helplessness in which men will be at first overwhelmed on the Day of Account. Old memories will be like a book almost blotted out. New hopes will be vague in a new world just rising on the

horizon. But it will be a perfectly just world, and no good action will be lost and no evil one but will have its compensating value estimated.

5. And the mountains will be like carded wool.(6253)

6253 *Cf.* n. 5682 to 70:9. The mountains are solid things, which seem as if nothing could move them. But in that tremendous cataclysm they will be scattered about like flakes of teased or carded wool. This is a metaphor to show that what we consider very substantial in this life will be as an airy nothing in the spiritual world.

6. Then, he whose balance (of good deeds)(6254) will be (found) heavy,

6254 The Good Deeds will be weighed and appraised. This appraisement will be of the nicest and justest kind: for it will take into account motives, temptations, provocations, surrounding conditions, antecedents, subsequent amends, and all possible connected circumstances. Against them, presumably, will be deeds of the opposite kind, appraised in the same way. If the good predominates, the judgement will be in the man's favour, and he will be ushered into a life of good pleasure and satisfaction. This will of course be on another plane. (R).

7. Will be in a life of good pleasure and Satisfaction.(6255)

6255 *Cf.* 98:8, and n. 6233, but perhaps the Bliss is not of the same grade for all men. In every case it is bliss, but bliss suited to the particular nature of the individual concerned.

8. But he whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) light,-

9. Will have his home in a (bottomless) Pit.(6256)

6256 Just as grades of bliss are indicated for the righteous, so apparently we are to understand grades of punishment suited to the sins of the individual sinners concerned.

10. And what will explain to thee what this is?

11. (It is) a Fire Blazing fiercely!



102. Al Takathur (The Piling Up)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. The mutual rivalry for piling up (the good things of this world) diverts you(6257) (from the more serious things),

6257 Acquisitiveness, that is, the passion for seeking an increase in wealth, position, the number of adherents or followers or supporters, mass production and mass organisation, may affect an individual as such, or it may affect whole societies or nations. Other people's example or rivalry in such things may aggravate the situation. Up to a certain point it may be good and necessary. But when it becomes inordinate and monopolises attention, it leaves no time for higher things in life, and a clear warning is here sounded from a spiritual point of view. Man may be engrossed in these things till death approaches, and he looks back on a wasted life, as far as the higher things are concerned.

2. Until ye visit the graves.(6258)

6258 That is, until the time comes when you must lie down in the graves and leave the pomp and circumstance of an empty life. The true Reality will then appear before you. Why not try to strive for a little understanding of that Reality in this very life?

3. But nay, ye soon shall know (the reality).

4. Again, ye soon shall know!

5. Nay, were ye to know with certainty of mind,(6259) (ye would beware!)

6259 Three kinds of *yaqin* (certainty of knowledge) are described in n. 5673 to 69:51. The first is certainty of mind or inference mentioned here: we hear from someone, or we infer from something we know: this refers to our own state of mind. If we instruct our minds in this way, we should value the deeper things of life better, and not waste all our time in ephemeral things. But if we do not use our reasoning faculties now, we shall yet see with our own eyes, the Penalty for our sins. It will be certainty of sight. We shall see Hell. See next verse. But the absolute certainty of assured Truth is that described in 69:51. That is not liable to any human error or psychological defect.

6. Ye shall certainly see Hellfire!(6260)

6260 See 19:71-72, and n. 2518.

7. Again, ye shall see it with certainty of sight!

8. Then, shall ye be questioned that Day about the joy(6261) (ye indulged in!).

6261 We shall be questioned, *i.e.,* we shall be held responsible for every kind of joy we indulge in; whether it was false pride or delight in things of no value, or things evil, or the enjoyment of things legitimate-the last, to see whether we kept this within reasonable bounds.

103. Al 'Asr (Time Through the Ages)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. By (the Token of) Time (through the Ages),(6262)

6262 *Al 'Asr* may mean: (1) Time through the Ages, or long periods, in which case it comes near to the abstract idea of Time, *Dahr,* which was sometimes deified by the Pagan Arabs (see Introduction to S. 76.); (2) or the late afternoon, from which the 'Asr canonical prayer takes its name (see n. 271 to 2:238). A mystic use of both these ideas is understood here. An appeal is made to Time as one of the creations of Allah, of which everyone knows something but of which no one can fully explain the exact significance. Time searches out and destroys everything material. No one in secular literature has expressed the tyranny of "never-resting Time" better than Shakespeare in his Sonnets. For example, see Sonnets 5 ("never-resting Time"), 12 ("Nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defense"), and 64 ("When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced, the rich proud cost of outworn buried age"). If we merely run a race against Time, we shall lose. It is the spiritual part of us that conquers Time. See verse 3 below. For the "afternoon" idea see next note.

2. Verily Man is in loss,(6263)

6263 If life be considered under the metaphor of a business bargain, man, by merely attending to his material gains, will lose. When he makes up his day's account in the afternoon, it will show a loss. It will only show profit if he has Faith, leads a good life, and contributes to social welfare by directing and encouraging other people on the Path of Truth and Constancy.

3. Except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds,(6264) and (join together)(6265) in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy.

6264 Faith is his armour, which wards off the wounds of the material world; and his righteous life is his positive contribution to spiritual ascent.

6265 If he lived only for himself, he would not fulfil his whole duty. Whatever good he has, especially in moral and spiritual life, he must spread among his brethren, so that they may see the Truth and stand by it in patient hope and unshaken constancy amidst all the storm and stress of outer life. For he and they will then have attained Peace within.



104. Al Humazah (The Scandalmonger)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Woe to every (kind of) scandal-monger and backbiter,(6266)

6266 Three vices are here condemned in the strangest terms: (1) scandalmongering, talking or suggesting evil of men or women by word or innuendo, or behaviour, or mimicry, or sarcasm, or insult; (2) detracting from their character behind their backs, even if the things suggested are true, where the motive is evil; (3) piling up wealth, not for use and service to those who need it, but in miserly hoards, as if such hoards can prolong the miser's life or give him immortality: miserliness is itself a kind of scandal.

2. Who pileth up wealth and layeth it by,

3. Thinking that his wealth would make him last for ever!

4. By no means! He will be sure to be thrown into That which Breaks to Pieces,(6267)

6267 *Hutamah:* that which smashes or breaks to pieces: an apt description of the three antisocial vices condemned. For scandalmongering and backbiting make any sort of cohesion or mutual confidence impossible; and the miser's hoards block up the channels of economic service and charity, and the circulation of good-will among men.

5. And what will explain to thee That which Breaks to Pieces?

6. (It is) the Fire of (the Wrath of) Allah kindled (to a blaze),

7. The which doth mount (Right) to the Hearts:(6268)

6268 This Fire of Punishment mounts right up to the hearts and minds of such men, and shuts them out of the love of their fellows. "Heart" in Arabic means not only the seat of affection, pity, charity, etc., but also of understanding and intelligent appreciation of things.

8. It shall be made into a vault over them,

9. In columns outstretched.(6269)

6269 Those guilty of these vices will be choked and suffocated, for this Vault of Fire will cover them all over, and its scorching columns will extend over a far wider area than they imagine.

105. Al Fil (The Elephant)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. **Seest(6270) thou not how thy Lord dealt with the Companions of the Elephant?(6271)**

6270 *Seest thou not?-i.e.* with thy mental vision. The incident happened in the very year of the Prophet's birth, barely two months before it.

6271 These were the troops of Abrahah the Abyssinian, who invaded Makkah with a large army, in which were some elephants. See Introduction to this Surah.

2. **Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray?**

3. **And He sent against them Flights of Birds,(6272)**

6272 The miracle consisted in the birds coming in large flights and flinging stones at the army which caused a great pestilence to arise and destroy the whole of Abrahah's army.

4. **Striking them with stones(6273) of baked clay.**

6273 *Sijjil: See* n. 1579 to 11:82. The word also occurs at 15:74. Stones of baked clay, or hard as baked clay, are part of the miracle in the story.

5. **Then did He make them like an empty field(6274) of stalks and straw, (of which the corn) has been eaten up.(6275)**

6274 A field, from which all the corn has been eaten up and only straw with stalks or stubble is left, is a field dead and useless. And such was the army of Abrahah-dead and useless. Another possible rendering would be: "like eaten straw and stubble found in the dung of animals". The meaning would be the same, but much more emphatic.

6275 The lesson to be drawn is twofold. For the Pagan Quraysh of Makkah it was: Allah will protect His own; if you persecute the Prophet, he is greater than the mere building of the Ka'bah: will not Allah protect him? For men in all ages it is: 'a man intoxicated with power can prepare armies and material resources against Allah's Holy Plan; but such a man's plan will be his own undoing; he cannot prevail against Allah'.



106. Quraysh (The Tribe of Quraysh)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. **For the covenants (of security and safeguard enjoyed) by the Quraysh,(6276)**

6276 Quraysh were the noblest tribe of Arabia , the tribe to which belonged the Prophet himself. They had the custody of the Ka'bah, the central shrine of Arabia, and their possession of Makkah gave them a triple advantage: (1) they had a commanding influence over other tribes; (2) their central position facilitated trade and intercourse, which gave them both honour and profit; and (3) the Makkah territory being, by Arabian custom, inviolable from the ravages of war and private feuds, they had a secure position, free from fear of danger. This honour and advantage they owed to their position as servants of the sacred shrine of the Ka'bah. They owed it to Allah. Was it not therefore right and fitting that they should adore the One True God, and listen to His Message of Unity and Purity, brought by His Prophet?

In those days of general insecurity, their prestige as custodians of Makkah enabled them to obtain Covenants of security and safeguard from the rulers of neighbouring countries on all sides-Syria, Persia, Yemen, and Abyssinia-protecting their trade journeys in all seasons.

2. **Their covenants (covering) journeys by winter and summer,-(6277)**

6277 See last note, especially section (2). On account of their trade journeys to the warmth of Yemen in the winter and the cooler regions of Syria and the north in the summer, Quraysh became practised travellers and merchants, acquired much knowledge of the world and many arts, and perfected their language as a polished medium of literary expression.

3. **Let them adore the Lord of this House,(6278)**

6278 The Ka'bah.

4. **Who provides them with food against hunger,(6279) and with security against fear (of danger).(6280)**

6279 Their trade caravans enriched them, and drew people from distant parts to visit Makkah and bring their merchandise and gifts thither.

6280 Their territory being inviolable, they did not suffer from the dangers of constant warfare nor from private feuds of vengeance or breaches of the peace in their secure homes

107. Al Ma'un (The Neighbourly Assistance)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Seest thou one who denies the Judgment(6281) (to come)?

6281 Din may mean either (1) the Judgement to come, the responsibility in the moral and spiritual world, for all actions done by men, or (2) Faith, Religion, the principles of right and wrong in spiritual matters, which often conflict with selfish desires or predilections. It is men who deny Faith or future responsibility, that treat the helpless with contempt and lead arrogant selfish lives.

2. Then such is the (man) who repulses the orphan (with harshness),

3. And encourages not(6282) the feeding of the indigent.

6282 The Charity or Love which feeds the indigent at the expense of Self is a noble form of virtue, which is beyond the reach of men who are so callous as even to discourage or forbid or look down upon the virtue of charity or kindness in others.

4. So woe to the worshippers

5. Who are neglectful of their Prayers,(6283)

6283 True worship does not consist in the mere form of prayer, without the heart and mind being earnestly applied to seek the realisation of the presence of Allah, and to understand and do His Holy Will.

6. Those who (want but) to be seen (of men),(6284)

6284 *Cf.* 4:142: "When they stand up to prayer, they stand without earnestness, to be seen of men, but little do they hold Allah in remembrance."

7. But refuse (to supply) (even) neighbourly needs.(6285)

6285 Hypocrites make a great show of hollow acts of goodness, devotion, and charily. But they fail signally if you test them by little acts of neighbourly help or charity, the thousand little courtesies and kindnesses of daily life, the supply of needs which cost little but mean much.



108. Al Kawthar (The Abundance)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. To thee have We granted the Fount (of Abundance).(6286)

6286 *Kawthar* literally means "good in abundance". It is the abundant bounty which Allah bestowed on Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). This includes a river (or fountain) in heaven of this name which Allah has promised the Prophet (peace be on him). [Eds.].

2. Therefore to thy Lord turn in Prayer and Sacrifice.(6287)

6287 He who grants these blessings is Allah, and to Allah alone must we turn in adoration and thanksgiving, and in sacrifice. *Nahr* = sacrifice: in a restricted ritual sense, the sacrifice of camels: see n. 2813 to 22:36. But the ritual is a mere Symbol. Behind it is a deep spiritual meaning; the meat slaughtered feeds the poor, and the slaughter is a symbol of the self-sacrifice in our hearts. "It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah; it is your piety that reaches Him" (22:37).

3. For he who hateth thee,(6288) he will be cut off (from Future Hope).

6288 Hatred and spite are not constructive contributions to the work of this world, but its opposites. Abu Jahl and his Pagan confederates vented their personal spite and venom against the Prophet by taunting him with the loss of his two infant sons by Khadijah, but where were these venomous detractors a few years afterwards, when the divine Light shone more brilliantly than ever? It was these that were cut off from all future hope, in this world and the next.

109. Al Kafirun (Those Who Reject Faith)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Say : O ye that reject Faith!(6289)

6289 Faith is a matter of personal conviction, and does not depend on worldly motives. Worship should depend on pure and sincere Faith, but often does not: for motives of worldly gain, ancestral custom, social conventions or imitative instincts, or a lethargic instinct to shrink from enquiring into the real significance of solemn acts and the motives behind them, reduce a great deal of the world's worship to sin, selfishness, or futility. Symbolic idols may themselves be merely instruments for safeguarding the privileges of a selfish priestly class, or the ambitions, greed, or lust of private individuals. Hence the insistence of Islam and its Teacher on the pure worship of the One True God. The Prophet firmly resisted all appeals to worldly motives, and stood firm to his Message of eternal Unity.

2. I worship not that which ye worship,

3. Nor will ye worship that which I worship.(6290)

6290 Verses 2-3 describe the conditions as they were at the time when this Surah was revealed, and may be freely paraphrased: 'I am a worshipper of the One True God, the Lord of all, of you as well as of myself; but you on account of your vested interests have not the will to give up your false worship, of idols and self. Verses 4-5 describe the psychological reasons; 'I, being a prophet of Allah do not and cannot possibly desire to follow your false ancestral ways; and you, as custodians of the false worship, have not the will to give up your ways of worship, which are wrong'. The "will" in the translation represents less the future tense than the will, the desire, the psychological possibility; it tries to reproduce the Arabic noun-agent.

4. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship,

5. Nor will ye worship that which I worship.

6. To you be your Way, and to me mine.(6291)

6291 'I, having been given the Truth, cannot come to your false ways; you, having your vested interests, will not give them up. For your ways the responsibility is yours: I have shown you the Truth. For my ways the responsibility is mine; you have no right to ask me to abandon the Truth. Your persecutions will be in vain; the Truth must prevail in the end'. This was the attitude of Faith then: but it is true for all time. Hold fast to Truth, "in scorn of consequence".



110. Al Nasr (The Help)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. When comes the Help of Allah, and Victory,

2. And thou dost see the people enter Allah.s Religion in crowds,(6292)

6292 The Prophet migrated from Makkah to Madinah, a hunted and persecuted man. In Madinah all the forces of truth and righteousness rallied round him, and the efforts by the Makkans and their confederates to destroy him and his community recoiled on their own heads. Gradually all the outlying parts of Arabia ranged themselves round his standard and the bloodless conquest of Makkah was the crown and prize of his patience and constant endeavour. After that, whole tribes and tracts of country gave their adhesion to him collectively, and before his earthly ministry was finished, the soil was prepared for the conquest of the wide world of Islam. What was the lesson to be learnt from this little epitome of the world's history? Not man's self-glory, but humility; not power but service; not an appeal to man's selfishness or self-sufficiency, but a realisation of Allah's Grace and Mercy, and the abundant outpouring of Allah's Praises in word and conduct.

3. Celebrate the praises of thy Lord, and pray for His Forgiveness:(6293) For He is Oft-Returning (in Grace and Mercy).

6293 Every man should humble himself before Allah, confess his human frailties, and seek Allah's grace-attributing any success that he gets in his work, not to his own merits, but to the goodness and mercy of Allah. But the Prophet of Allah had also another duty and privilege-to pray for grace and forgiveness for his people in case any of them had exulted in their victory or done anything that they should not have done.

111. Al Lahab (The Flame)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. **Perish the hands of the Father of Flame!(6294) Perish he!**

<u>6294</u> *Abu Lahab:* "Father of Flame", was the nickname of an uncle of the Prophet, from his fiery hot temper and his ruddy complexion. He was one of the most inveterate enemies of early Islam. When the Prophet called together Quraysh and his own kith and kin to come and listen to his preaching and his warning against the sins of his people, the "Father of Flame" flared up and cursed the Prophet, saying "Perdition to thee!" According to the English saying, "the causeless curse will not come". His words were futile, but his power and strength were equally futile. The star of Islam rose higher and higher every day, and its persecutors dwindled in strength and power. Many of the leaders of persecution perished at Badr, and Abu Lahab himself perished a week after Badr, consumed with grief and his own fiery passions. Verse 3 was prophetic of his end in this very life, though it also refers to the Hereafter.

2. **No profit to him from all his wealth, and all his gains!**

3. **Burnt soon will he be in a Fire of Blazing Flame!**

4. **His wife shall carry the (crackling) wood - As fuel!-(6295)**

<u>6295</u> Abu Lahab's wife was a woman of equally passionate spite and cruelty against the sacred person of the Prophet. She used to tie bundles of thorns with ropes of twisted palm-leaf fibre and carry them and strew them about on dark nights in the paths which the Prophet was expected to take, in order to cause him bodily injury. "To carry firewood" may also be symbolical for carrying tales between people to embroil them. This was also one of her vices. But she was laying up for herself another kind of Fire and another kind of Rope, the Fire of Punishment, and the Rope of Slavery to Evil. Thus does Evil prepare its own fate. This is the general lesson of sustained craft and cruel wrongdoing recoiling on the wrongdoer's head. See also Introduction to this Surah.

5. **A twisted rope of palm-leaf fibre round her (own) neck!**



112. Al Ikhlas (The Purity of Faith)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. **Say: He is Allah,(6296) the One and Only;(6297)**

<u>6296</u> The nature of Allah is here indicated to us in a few words, such as we can understand. The qualities of Allah are described in numerous places elsewhere, *e.g.,* in 59:22-24, 62:1, and 2:255. Here we are specially taught to avoid the pitfalls into which men and nations have fallen at various times in trying to understand Allah. The first thing we have to note is that His nature is so sublime, so far beyond our limited conceptions, that the best way in which we can realise Him is to feel that He is a Personality, "He", and not a mere abstract conception of philosophy. He is near us; He cares for us; we owe our existence to Him. Secondly, He is the One and Only God, the Only One to Whom worship is due; all other things or beings that we can think of are His creatures and in no way comparable to Him. Thirdly, He is Eternal, without beginning or end, Absolute, not limited by time or place or circumstance, the Reality before which all other things or places are mere shadows or reflections. Fourthly, we must not think of Him as having a son or a father, for that would be to import animal qualities into our conception of Him. Fifthly, He is not like any other person or thing that we know or can imagine: His qualities and nature are unique.

<u>6297</u> This is to negate the idea of Polytheism, a system in which people believe in gods many and lords many. Such a system is opposed to our truest and profoundest conceptions of life. For Unity in Design, Unity in the fundamental facts of existence, proclaim the Unity of the Maker.

2. **Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;(6298)**

<u>6298</u> *Samad* is difficult to translate by one word. I have used two, "Eternal" and "Absolute". The latter implies: (1) that absolute existence can only be predicted of Him; all other existence is temporal or conditional; (2) that He is dependent on no person or things, but all persons or things are dependent on Him, thus negativing the idea of gods and goddesses who ate and drank, wrangled and plotted, depended on the gifts of worshippers, etc.

3. **He begetteth not, nor is He begotten;(6299)**

<u>6299</u> This is to negative the Christian idea of the godhead, "the Father", "the only-begotten Son" etc.

4. **And there is none like unto Him.(6300)**

<u>6300</u> This sums up the whole argument and warns us specially against Anthropomorphism, the tendency to conceive of Allah after our own pattern, an insidious tendency that creeps in at all times and among all peoples.

113. Al Falaq (The Daybreak)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Say: I seek refuge(6301) with the Lord of the Dawn(6302)

6301 In Allah's created world, there are all kinds of forces and counterforces, especially those put in motion by beings who have been endowed with some sort of will. The forces of good may be compared to light, and those of evil to darkness. Allah can cleave the depths of darkness and produce light (6:96), and therefore we should cast off fear and take refuge in divine guidance and goodness.

6302 *Falaq* is the Dawn or Daybreak, the cleaving of darkness and the manifestation of light. This may be understood in various senses: (1) literally, when the darkness of the night is at its worst, rays of light pierce through and produce the dawn; (2) when the darkness of ignorance is at its worst, the light of Allah pierces through the soul and gives it enlightenment: 24:35; (3) non-existence is darkness, and life and activity may be typified by light. The author and source of all true light is Allah, and if we seek Him, we are free from ignorance, superstition, fear, and every kind of evil.

2. From the mischief of created things;(6303)

6303 See n. 6301 above. Our trust in Allah is the refuge from every kind of fear and superstition, every kind of danger and evil. Three special kinds of mischief are specified in the next three verses, against which our best guard is our trust in Allah, the Light of the heavens and the earth. They are: (1) physical dangers, typified by darkness, (2) psychical dangers within us, typified by Secret Arts, and (3) psychical dangers from without us, resulting from a perverted will, which seeks to destroy any good that we enjoy.

3. From the mischief of Darkness as it overspreads;(6304)

6304 The darkness of the night, physical darkness, is a good type of physical dangers and difficulties. Many people are afraid of physical darkness, and all are afraid of physical injuries, accidents, and calamities. We should not fear, but having taken reason able precautions, trust in Allah.

4. From the mischief of those who practise Secret Arts;(6305)

6305 *Those who practise Secret Arts:* literally, 'those (feminine) who blow on knots', this having been a favourite form of witchcraft practiced by perverted women. Such secret arts cause psychological terror. They may be what is called magic, or secret plottings, or the display of false and seductive charms (3:14), or the spreading of false and secret rumours or slanders to frighten men or deter them from right action. There is fraud in such things, but men are swayed by it. They should cast off fear and do their duty.

5. And from the mischief of the envious one as he practises envy.(6306)

6306 Malignant envy, translated into action, seeks to destroy the happiness or the material or spiritual good enjoyed by other people. The best guard against it is trust in Allah with purity of heart.



114. Al Nas (Mankind)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. Say: I seek refuge(6307) with the Lord and Cherisher of Mankind,(6308)

6307 The previous Surah pointed to the necessity of seeking Allah's protection against external factors which might affect an individual. Here the need of protection from internal factors, mankind being viewed as a whole, is pointed out. For this reason the threefold relation in which man stands to Allah is mentioned, as explained in the next note.

6308 Man's relation to Allah may be viewed in three aspects: (1) Allah is his Lord, Maker, and Cherisher; Allah sustains him and cares for him; He provides him with all the means for his growth and development, and for his protection against evil; (2) Allah is his king or ruler; more than any earthly king, Allah has authority to guide man's conduct, and lead him to ways which will make for his welfare; and He has given him laws; and (3) Allah is He to Whom mankind must return, to give an account of all their deeds in this life (2:156); Allah will be the Judge; He is the goal of the Hereafter, and the only Being entitled to man's worship at any time. From all these aspects man could and should seek Allah's protection against evil.

2. The King (or Ruler) of Mankind,

3. The Allah (for judge) of Mankind,-

4. From the mischief of the Whisperer(6309) (of Evil), who withdraws (after his whisper),-

6309 Evil insinuates itself in all sorts of insidious ways from within so as to sap man's will, which was given to man by Allah. This power of evil may be Satan or his host of evil ones, or evil men or the evil inclinations within man's own will: for there are "evil ones among men and Jinns, inspiring each other with flowery discourses by way of deception" (6:112). They secredy whisper evil and then withdraw, to make their net the more subtle and alluring (see also n. 941).

5. (The same) who whispers into the hearts of Mankind,-

6. Among Jinns and among Men.(6310)

6310 This last clause amplifies the description of the sources from which the whisper of evil may emanate: they may be men whom you may see or invisible spirits of evil working within. See last note. So long as we put ourselves in Allah's protection, and trust in Allah, evil cannot really touch us in our essential and inner life.